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THE

WORKS

OF

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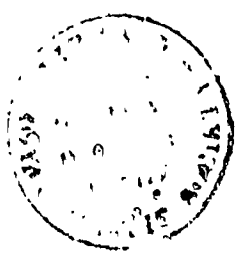
VOLUME TWENTY-SECOND.



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LECTURES

ON THE

EPISTLE OF PAUL THE APOSTLE

TO THE

ROMANS.

BY

THOMAS CHALMERS, D.D. & LL.D.

PROFESSOR OF THEOLOGY IN THE UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH,
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VOL. I.

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ADVERTISEMENT.

A SERIES of pulpit discourses on the obvious subject-matter of Scripture, is of a different character, from those critical and expository works, the object of which is to fix and ascertain the meaning—even of the more obscure and controverted, as well as of the clearest passages. The following is a record of the Sabbath preparations of many years back—now given without change or improvement to the world, and the appearance of which in their present state is very much owing to the frequently expressed desire of my old hearers, to have the Lectures which I delivered on the Epistle to the Romans, set before them in a more permanent form.

But it may be right to mention that the Pulpit Lectures which were delivered during my incumbency in the Parish of St. John's Glasgow, from September 1819 to November 1823, extend only a little way into the Tenth Chapter; and that the remaining Lectures, with the exception of the one on xiv, 17, have been only prepared now for the completion of this work.

Edinburgh 1st January, 1842.

LECTURES ON THE ROMANS.

INTRODUCTORY LECTURE.

It is possible to conceive the face of our world overspread with a thick and midnight darkness, and without so much as a particle of light to alleviate it, from any one quarter of the firmament around us. In this case, it were of no avail to the people who live in it, that all of them were in possession of sound and perfect eyes. The organ of sight may be entire, and yet nothing be seen from the total absence of external light among the objects on every side of us. Or in other words, to bring about the perception of that which is without, it is not enough that we have the power of vision among men; but, in addition to this, there must be a visibility in the trees, and the houses, and the mountains, and the living creatures, which are now in the ordinary discernment of men.

But, on the other hand, we may reverse the supposition. We may conceive an entire luminousness to be extended over the face of nature—while the faculty of sight was wanting among all the individuals of our species. In this case, the external light would be of as little avail towards our perception of any object at a distance from us,

as the mere possession of the sense of seeing was in the former instance. Both must conspire to the effect of our being rendered conversant with the external world through the medium of the eye. And if the power of vision was not enough, without a visibility on the part of the things which are around us, by God saying let there be light—as little is their visibility enough, without the power of vision stamped as an endowment by the hand of God, on the creatures whom He has formed.

Now we can conceive that both these defects or disabilities, in the way of vision, may exist at the same time—or that all the world was dark, and that all the people in the world were blind. To emerge out of this condition—there must be a two-fold process begun and carried forward, and at length brought to its full and perfect termination. Light must be poured upon the earth, and the faculty of seeing must be conferred upon its inhabitants. One can imagine, that, instead of the light being made instantaneously to burst upon us in its highest splendour, and, instead of the faculty being immediately bestowed upon us in full vigour to meet and to encounter so strong a tide of effulgency—that both these processes were conducted in a way that was altogether gradual—that the light, for example, had its first weak glimmering; and that the eye, in the feebleness of its infancy, was not overcome by it—that the light advanced with morning step to a clearer brilliancy; and that the eye, rendered able to bear it, multiplied the objects of its sight, and took in a wider range of perception—that the light shone at length unto the per-

fect day; and that the eye, with the last finish upon its properties and its powers, embraced the whole of that variety which lies within the present compass of human contemplation. We must see that if one of these processes be gradual, the other should be gradual also. By shedding too strong a light upon weak eyes, we may overpower and extinguish them. By granting too weak a light to him who has strong eyes, we make the faculty outstrip the object of its exercise, and thus incur a waste of endowment. By attempering the one process to the other, we maintain, throughout all the stages, that harmony which is so abundantly manifested in the works of Nature and Providence, between man as he actually is, and the circumstances by which man is actually surrounded.

These preliminary statements will we trust be of some use for illustrating the progress, not of natural, but of spiritual light, along that path which forms the successive history of our world. Whatever discernment Adam had of the things of God in Paradise, the fall which he experienced was a fall into the very depths of the obscurity of midnight. The faculties he had in a state of innocence, made him able to perceive, that the Creator, who formed him, took pleasure in all that He had formed; and rejoiced over them so long as He saw that they were good. But when they ceased to be good, and became evil—when sin had crept into our world in the shape of a novelty as yet unheard, and as yet unprovided for—when the relation of man to his Maker was not merely altered, but utterly and diametrically reversed—when, from a

loyal and affectionate friend, he had become at first a daring, and then a distrustful and affrighted rebel —Adam may, when a sense of integrity made all look bright and smiling and serene around him, have been visited from Heaven with the light of many high communications; nor could he feel at a loss to comprehend, how He, who was the Fountain of moral excellence, should cherish, with a Father's best and kindest regards, all those whom He had filled and beautified and blest with its unsullied emanations: But, after the gold had become dim, how He whose eye was an eye of unspotted holiness could look upon it with complacency—after the sentence had been incurred, how, while truth and unchangeableness were the attributes of God, it ever could be reversed by the lips of Him who pronounced it—after guilt with all its associated terrors had changed to the view of our first parents the aspect of the Divinity, how the light of His countenance should ever beam upon them again with an expression of love or tenderness—These were the mysteries which beset and closed and shrouded in thickest darkness, the understandings of those who had just passed out of innocence into sin. Till God made this first communication, there was no external light, to alleviate that despair and dreariness which followed the first visitation of a feeling so painful and so new as the consciousness of evil. And, if the agitations of the heart have any power to confuse and to unsettle the perceptions of the understanding—if remorse and perplexity and fear, go to disturb the exercise of all our judging and all our discern-

ing faculties—if, under the engrossment of one great and overwhelming apprehension, we can neither see with precision nor contemplate with steadiness—above all, if, under the administration of a righteous God, there be a constant alliance between spiritual darkness and a sense of sin unpardoned or sin unexpiated—Then may we be sure that an obscurity of the deepest character lay upon the first moments in the history of sinful man; and which required both light from Heaven upon his soul, and a renovation of its vitiated and disordered faculties, ere it could be effectually dissipated.

From this point then, the restoration of spiritual light to our benighted world takes its commencement—when Adam was utterly blind; and the canopy over his head, was palled in impenetrable darkness. To remove the one disability, was in itself to do nothing—to remove the other disability, was in itself to do nothing. Both must be removed, ere Adam could again see. Both may have been removed instantaneously; and by one fiat of Omnipotence, such a perfection of spiritual discernment may have been conferred on our first parents, and such a number of spiritual truths have been made by a direct communication from Heaven to stand around him, as in a single moment would have ushered him into all the splendours of a full and finished revelation. But this has not been God's method in His dealings with a sinful world. Spiritual light and spiritual discernment, were not called forth to meet each other, in all the plenitude of an unclouded brilliancy, at the bidding of His immediate voice. The outward truth has been

dealt out by a gradual process of revelation—and the inward perception of it has been made to maintain a corresponding pace through a process equally gradual. A greater number of spiritual objects has been introduced, from one time to another, into the field of visibility—and the power of spiritual vision has from one age to another been made to vary and to increase along with them.

Those truths, which make up the body of our written revelation, may be regarded as so many objects, on which visibility has been conferred by so many successive communications of light from Heaven. They were at first few in number; and these few were offered to mankind, under the disguise of a rather vague and extended generality. The dawn of this eternal revelation was marked by the solitary announcement, given to our outcast progenitors, that the seed of the woman should bruise the head of the serpent. To this, other announcements were added in the progress of ages —and even the great truth, which lay enveloped in the very first of them, had a growing illumination cast upon it in the lapse of generations. The promise given to Adam, brightened into a more cheering and intelligible hope, when renewed to Abraham, in the shape of an assurance, that, through one of his descendants, all the families of the earth were to be blest; and to Jacob, that Shiloh was to be born, and that to Him the gathering of the people should be; and to Moses, that a great Prophet was to arise like unto himself; and to David, that one of his house was to sit upon his throne for ever; and to Isaiah, that one was to

appear, who should be a light unto the Gentiles, and the salvation of all the ends of the earth; and to Daniel, that the Messiah was to be cut off, but not for Himself, and that through Him reconciliation was to be made for iniquity, and an everlasting righteousness was to be brought in; and to John the Baptist, that the kingdom of Heaven was at hand, and the Prince of that kingdom was immediately to follow in the train of his own ministrations; and to the apostles in the days of our Saviour upon earth, that He with whom they companied was soon to be lifted up for the healing of the nations, and that all who looked to Him should live; and finally, to the apostles after the day of Pentecost, when, fraught with the full and explicit tidings of a world's atonement and a world's regeneration, they went forth with the doctrine of Christianity in its entire copiousness, and have transmitted it to future ages in a book, of which it has been said, that no man shall add thereto, and that no man shall take away from it.

This forms but a faint and a feeble outline of that march, by which God's external revelation hath passed magnificently onwards, from the first days of our world, through the twilight of the patriarchal ages—and the brightening of the Jewish dispensation, aided as it was by the secondary lustre of types and of ceremonies—and the constant accumulation of Prophecy, with its visions every century becoming more distinct, and its veil becoming more transparent—and the personal communications of God manifest in the flesh, who opened His mouth amongst us, but still opened it in par-

ables—insomuch that when He ascended from His disciples, He still left them in wonder and dimness and mystery—Till, by the pouring forth of the Holy Spirit from the place which He had gone to occupy, the evidence of inspiration received its last and its mightiest enlargement, which is now open to all for the purpose of perusal, but so shut against every purpose of augmentation, that in this respect it may be said, its words are closed up and sealed to the time of the end.

The Epistle to the Romans, forms one of the most complete and substantial products of this last and greatest illumination. In this document, the visibility of external revelation is poured forth not merely on the greatest variety of Christian doctrine, but on that doctrine so harmoniously blended with the truths of human experience—so solidly reared from the foundation of Jesus Christ and of Him crucified, into a superstructure at once firm and graceful and stately—so branching forth into all the utilities of moral and practical application —and, at length, from an argument bearing upon one great conclusion, so richly efflorescing into all the virtues and accomplishments which serve both to mark and to adorn the person of regenerated man—Such is the worth and the density and the copiousness of this epistle—that, did our power of vision keep pace at all with the number and the value of those spiritual lessons which abound in it, then indeed should we, become the children of light, be rich in a wisdom that the world knoweth not, in a wisdom which is unto salvation.

But the outward light by which an object is ren-

dered visible is one thing—and the power of vision is another. That these two are not only distinct in respect of theoretical conception, but were also experimentally distinct from each other in the actual history of God's communications to the world, will, we trust, be made to appear from several passages of that revealed history in the Bible; and from one single appeal which we shall make to the experience of our hearers.

The first passage is in 1 Peter, i, 10–12. "Of which salvation the prophets have enquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you. Searching what, or what manner of time, the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow. Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us, they did minister the things which are now reported unto you, by them that have preached the gospel unto you, with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven; which things the angels desire to look into." This passage sets the old prophets before us in a very striking attitude. They positively did not know the meaning of their own prophecies. They were like men of dim and imperfect sight, whose hand was guided by some foreign power to the execution of a picture—and who, after it was finished, vainly attempted, by straining their eyes, to explain and to ascertain the subject of it. They were the transmitters of a light, which, at the same time, did not illuminate themselves. They uttered the word, or they put it down in writing, as it was given

to them—and then they searched by their own power, but searched in vain for the signification of it. They enquired diligently what the meaning of the Spirit could be, when it testified of the sufferings of Christ and the glory of Christ. But till that Spirit gave the power of discernment, as well as set before them the objects of discernment—their attempts were nugatory. And indeed they were sensible of this, and acquiesced in it. It was told them by revelation, that the subject-matter of their prophecy was not for themselves, but for others—even for those to whom the gospel should be preached in future days, and who, along with the ministration of the external word, were to receive the ministration of the Holy Ghost—whose office it is to put into the mouths of prophets the things which are to be looked to and believed, and whose office also it is to put into the hearts of others the power of seeing and believing these things. And it serves clearly to mark the distinction between these two offices, that the prophets, alluded to in this passage, presented to the world a set of truths which they themselves did not understand—and that again the private disciples of Peter, who were not so learned as to be made the original and inspired authors of such a communication were honoured with the far more valuable privilege of being made to understand it.

This we think will appear still more clearly from another passage of the same apostle in 2 Peter, i, 19–21. "We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until

the day dawn, and the day-star arise in your hearts. Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the Scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man; but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." No prophecy is of private interpretation. It was not suggested by the natural sense of him who uttered it—and as little is it understood, or can it be explained, by the natural powers of the same person. He was the mere recipient of a higher influence; and he conveyed what he had thus received to the world—speaking not of his own will but just as he was moved by the Holy Ghost—and enabled to discern or to expound the meaning of what he had thus spoken, not of his own power, but just as the same Holy Ghost who gave him the materials of contemplation, gave him also the faculty of a just and true contemplation. The light of which he was barely the organ of transmission, shone in a dark place; so long as it shone upon the blind; and, not till the blind was made to see—not till the eyes of those, who were taking heed to the letter of the prophecy, were opened to perceive the life and meaning and spirit of the prophecy—not till that day which has dawned, and that day-star which had arisen on the outward page of revelation had also dawned and arisen upon their own hearts—not, in short, till the great agent of all revelation, even the Holy Spirit who had already furnished the object of perception in the word, had also furnished the organ of perception in the understanding—Not till then, were the enquiries after the truth as it is in

Jesus effectually introduced, to a full acquaintance with all its parts,—or to the full benefit of all its influence.

We cannot take leave of this passage, without adverting to the importance of that practical injunction which is contained in it. They who are still in darkness are called upon to look, and with earnestness too, to a particular quarter; and that is the word of God—and to do so *until* the power of vision was granted to them. If a blind man were desirous of beholding a landscape, and had the hope at the same time of having his sight miraculously restored to him, he might, even when blind, go to the right post of observation, and turn his face to the right direction, and thus wait for the recovery of that power which was extinguished. And, in like manner, we are all at the right post, when we are giving heed to our Bibles. We are all going through a right exercise, when, with the strenuous application of our natural powers, we are reading and pondering and comparing and remembering the words of the testimony—and if asked, how long we should persevere in this employment, let us persevere in it with patience and prayer until, as Peter says, until the day dawn and the day-star arise in our hearts.

That John the Baptist should not know himself to have been he who was to come in the spirit and power of Elijah; and hence, in reply to the question Art thou Elias? should say that I am not—whereas our Saviour affirmed of him, that he was the Elias who should come—this ignorance of his may be as much due to the want of outward in-

formation about the point, as to any lack in the faculty of discernment. The same thing however can scarcely be said of his ignorance of the true character of the very Messiah whom he himself foretold—insomuch, that, though he had baptized him and attested him to be the Lamb of God, and had seen the Spirit descending upon him like a dove—yet he seems afterwards to have been so much startled by the obscurity of his circumstances, and by the style of his companionship which looked unsuitable to the character of a great Prince and Deliverer, that, in perplexity about the matter, he sent his disciples to Jesus to ask whether he was the person who should come or they had to look for another? He laboured under such a disadvantage, whether of darkness or of blindness about the whole nature of the new dispensation, that though, in respect of light, he was greater than the greatest of the prophets, who had gone before him—yet, in the very same respect, he was less than the least in the kingdom of heaven; or less than the least enlightened of the Christian disciples who should come after him.

The constant misapprehension of our Saviour's own immediate disciples, of which we read so much in the Gospels, was certainly due as much to their being blind as to their being in the dark—to their defect in the power of seeing, as to any defect in the visibility of what was actually set before them.

We read of our Saviour's sayings being hid from them, that they perceived not—and of His dealing out the light of external truth to them, as their eyes were able to bear it—and of His averring, in

spite of all He had dealt out in the course of His personal ministrations upon earth, of His averring, at the close of these ministrations, that as yet they knew nothing, though if they had had the power of discernment, they might surely have learned much from what is now before us in the Gospels, and of which they were both the eye and the ear witnesses. We further read, that after the resurrection, when He met two of His disciples, and the eyes of their body were holden that they should not know Him, just as the eyes of their mind were holden that they should not know the things which were said in Moses and the Prophets and all the Scriptures concerning Himself, they at length came to recognize His person—not by any additional light thrown upon the external object, but simply by their eyes being opened; and they also came to recognize Him in the Scriptures—not by any change or any addition to the word of their testimony, but simply by their understandings being opened to understand them. We also read of the descent of the Holy Ghost in the day of Pentecost—that event on which our Saviour set such an importance, as to make it more than an equivalent for His own presence in the way of teaching and enlightening the minds of His apostles. "If I go not away, he will not come unto you—but if I depart, then him who is not yet given, because I am not yet glorified, I will send unto you. And he will guide you into all truth, and take of my things, and show them unto you." There is no doubt that He showed them new things, which we have in the Epistles; and so made the light of external revelation shine more

fully and brightly upon them. But there is as little doubt, that, in His office as a Revealer, He made them see old things more clearly than before; and that, by a direct work on the power of mental perception, He brought them to their remembrance; and He made them skilful in the discernment of Scripture—a term applied exclusively at that time to the writings of the Old Testament; and He, not only cleared away the external darkness which rested on that part of Christian doctrine that was still unpromulgated, but He strengthened and purified that organ of discernment through which the light both of things new and old finds its way into the heart—insomuch that we know not two states of understanding which stand more decidedly contrasted with each other, than that of the apostles before, and of the same apostles after the resurrection—so that from being timid, irresolute, confused, and altogether doubting and unsatisfied enquirers, they became the brave unshrinking and consistent ministers of a spiritual faith—looking back both on the writings of the Old Testament, and on our Saviour's conversations with other eyes than they had formerly; and enabled so to harmonize them all with their subsequent revelations, as to make them perceive an evangelical spirit and an evangelical meaning even in those earlier communications, which, of themselves, shed so dim and so feeble a lustre over the patriarchal and the prophetic ages.

So that the office of the Holy Ghost with the apostles, was, not merely to show them things new respecting Christ, but to make them see things

both new and old. The former of His functions, as we said before, has now ceased—nor have we reason to believe, that, during the whole currency of our present world, there will another article of doctrine or information be given to us, than what is already treasured up in the written and unalterable word of God's communications. But the latter function is still in full exercise. It did not cease with the apostolic age. The external revelation is completed. But, for the power of beholding aright the truths which it sets before us, we are just as dependent on the Holy Ghost as the apostles of old were. His miraculous gifts and His conveyances of additional doctrine are now over. But His whole work in the church of Christ is not nearly over. He has shed all the light that He ever will do over the field of revelation. But He has still to open the eyes of the blind; and, with every individual of the human race, has He to turn him from a natural man who cannot receive the things of the Spirit, to a spiritual man by whom alone these things can be spiritually discerned.

There is with many amongst us, an undervaluing of this part of the Christian dispensation. The office of the Holy Ghost as a revealer is little adverted to, and therefore little proceeded upon in any of our practical movements. We set ourselves forth to the work of reading and understanding the Bible, just as we would any human composition—and this is so far right—for it is only when thus employed that we have any reason to look for the Spirit's agency in our behalf. But surely the fact of His agency being essential, is one, not of speculative but

of practical importance—and ought to admonish us, that there is one peculiarity, by which the book of God stands distinguished from the book of a human author, and that is that it is not enough it should be read with the spirit of attention, but with the spirit of dependence and of prayer.

We should like if this important part in the process of man's recovery to God, held a more conspicuous place in your estimation. We should like you to view it as a standing provision for the church of Christ in all ages. It was not set up for a mere temporary purpose, to shed a fleeting brilliancy over an age of gifted and illuminated men that has now rolled by. Such is the value, and such the permanency of this gift of the Holy Ghost, that it almost looks to be the great and ultimate design of Christ's undertaking, to obtain the dispensation of it, as the accomplishment of a promise by His Father. And when Peter explained to the multitude its first and most wondrous exhibition on the day of Pentecost, he did not restrict it to one period or to one country of the world. But the gift of the Holy Ghost is "unto you," he says, "and to your children, and to as many as the Lord our God shall call." We think that if we saw Christ in person, and had the explanation of our Bibles from His own mouth, this would infallibly conduct us to the highest eminences of spiritual wisdom. But blessed be they who have not seen, but yet have believed—and Christ hath expressly told us, that it is better He should go away from the world, for "if he did not go away the Spirit would not come—but that if he

went away he would send him." What the mysterious connection is between Christ's entrance into heaven, and the free egress of the Holy Ghost upon earth, it is not for us to enquire. But such is the revealed fact, that we are in better circumstances for being guided unto all truth by having a part and an interest in this promise, than if we had personal access to the Saviour still sojourning and still ministering amongst us. Let us not despise that which has so mighty a place assigned to it in the counsels of God—and if, heretofore, a darkness has hung over the pages of the word of His testimony—let us feel assured that in Him or in His communications there is no darkness at all. It is not because He is dark, but because we are blind that we do not understand Him; and we give you, not a piece of inert orthodoxy, but a piece of information which may be turned to use and to account on your very next perusal of any part of the Bible—when we say that it is the office of the Spirit to open the eye of your mind to the meaning of its intimations, and that God will not refuse His Holy Spirit to those who ask Him.

This brings us by a very summary process to the resolution of the question, How is it that the Spirit acts as a revealer of truth to the human understanding? To deny Him this office, on the one hand, is, in fact, to set aside what by the fullest testimony of the Bible is held forth as the process, in every distinct and individual case, whereby each man at his conversion is called out of darkness into marvellous light. On the other hand, to deny such a fulness and such a sufficiency of doctrine in

the Bible, as if behold and believed is enough for salvation, is to count it necessary that something should be added to the words of the prophecy of this book, which if any man do, God will add unto him all the plagues that are written therein. There is no difficulty in effecting a reconciliation between these two parties. The Spirit guides unto all truth, and all truth is to be found in the Bible—The Spirit therefore guides us unto the Bible. He gives us that power of discernment, by which we are wisely and intelligently conducted through all its passages. His office is not to brighten into additional splendour the sun of revelation, or even to clear away any clouds that may have gathered over the face of it. His office is to clarify our organs of perception, and to move away that film from the spiritual eye, which, till He begins to operate, adheres with the utmost obstinacy in the case of every individual of our species. The ebbs and the alternations of spiritual light in our world, are not due to any fluctuating movements, in the flame, which issues from that luminary that has been hung out as a lamp unto our feet and a light unto our paths. It is due to the variations which take place, of soundness or disease, in the organs of the beholders. That veil which was at one time on the face of Moses, is now upon the heart of the unconverted Israelites. The blindness is in their minds, and they are in darkness, just because of this veil being yet untaken away in the reading of the Old Testament or in the New—but this veil which is now upon their faculties of spiritual discernment, will simply be taken away. The unconverted of our

own country, to whom the gospel is hid, do not perceive it, not because there is a want of light in the gospel which would need to be augmented, but because the God of this world hath blinded their own minds, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ who is the image of God should shine unto them. God hath already commanded all the external light of revelation, which he ever purposes to do, in behalf of our world—and that light shines upon all to whom the word of salvation is sent. But though it shines upon all, it does not shine into all. He hath already commanded the light to shine out of darkness—and we now wait for that opening and purifying of the organ of conveyance which is upon our person, that it may shine into our hearts and thence give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ Jesus. The period of the new dispensation has been a period of light, as much from the increase of vision as from the increase of visibility. The vacillation of this light from one age to another, is not from any periodical changes in the decay or the brightening of the outward luminary. It is from the partial shuttings and openings of a screen of interception. And, in those millennial days, when the gospel, in full and unclouded brilliancy, shall shine upon the world—it will not be because light came down to it from Heaven in a tide of more copious supply—but because God will destroy the face of the covering that is cast over all people; and the veil that is spread over all nations.

The light is exceedingly near to every one of us, and we might even now be in the full and satisfac-

tory enjoyment of it—were it not for a something in ourselves. All that is necessary is, that the veil, which hangs over our own senses, be destroyed. The obstacle in the way of spiritual manifestation, does not lie in the dimness of that which is without us—but in the state of our own personal faculties. Let the organ of discernment be only set right; and the thing to be discerned will then appear in its native brightness, and just in the very features and complexion which it has worn from the beginning, and in which it has offered itself to the view of all whose eyes have been opened by the Spirit of God, to behold the wondrous things contained in the book of God's law. His office is not to deal in variable revelations to a people sitting in darkness. It is to lift up the heavy eyelids of a people who are blind, that they may see the characters of a steady unchangeable and ever-during record. The light is near us, and round about us; and all that remains to be done for its being poured into the innermost recesses of every soul, is the destruction of that little tegument which lies in the channel of communication, between the objects which are visible and him for whose use and whose perception they are intended. To come in contact with spiritual light, we have not to ascend into heaven, and fetch an illuminated torch from its upper sanctuaries—we have not to descend into the deep, and, out of the darkness of its hidden mysteries, bring to the openness of day some secret thing that before was inaccessible. All that we shall ever find is in that word which is nigh unto us, even in our mouth; and which, by the penetrating energies of

Him in whose hand it becometh a sword, can find its way through all the dark and obstructed avenues of nature, and reach its convictions and its influences and its lessons to the very thoughts and intents of the heart. If you be longing for a light which you have not yet gotten—it is worth your knowing, that the firmament of a man's spiritual vision is already set round with all its splendours—that not one additional lamp will for your behoof be hung out from the canopy of heaven—that the larger and the lesser lights of revelation are already ordained; and not so much as one twinkling luminary will either be added or expunged from this hemisphere of the soul, till this material earth and these material heavens be made to pass away—And therefore, if still sitting in the region and under the shadow of death, there be any of you who long to be ushered into the manifestations of the gospel, know that this is done, not by any change in that which is without, but by a change in that which is within—by a medicating process upon your own faculties—by the simplicity of a personal operation.

This is something more than the mere didactic affirmation of a speculative or scholastic Theology. It contains within its bosom the rudiments of a most important practical direction, to every reader and every enquirer. If I do not see, not because there is a darkness around me, but because there is a blindness upon me adhering in the shape of a personal attribute—it were a matter of great practical account to ascertain, if this defect do not stand associated with other defects in my character

and mind which are also personal. And when we read of the way in which the moral and the intellectual are blended together in the doctrines of the New Testament—how one apostle affirms, that he who hateth his brother is in darkness; and another, that he who lacketh certain virtues is blind and cannot see afar off; and another, that men who did not, up to what they knew, award the glory and the gratitude to God, had their foolish hearts darkened, so as to have that which they at one time possessed taken away from them; and how our Saviour resolves the condemnation of men's unbelief into the principle that they loved the darkness, and therefore wilfully shut their eyes to the truth that was offered—All this goes to demonstrate, that presumptuous sin stands in the way of spiritual discernment; that evil deeds, and the indulgence of evil affections, serve to thicken that film which has settled upon the mental eye, and obscures its every perception of the truths of revelation. And this much at least may be turned into a matter of sure and practical inference from all these elucidations—that the man who is not yet awakened to a sense of his iniquities, and not evincing it by putting forth upon them the hand of a strenuous and determined reform; that the man who stifles the voice of conscience within him, and, the slave of his inveterate habits, never, either in practice or in prayer, makes an honest struggle for his own emancipation; that he who makes not a single effort against the conformities or the associations of worldliness; and, far more, he who still persists in its dishonesties or its grosser dissipations

—he may stand all his days on the immediate margin of a brightness that is altogether celestial, and yet, in virtue of an interposed barrier which he is doing all he can to make more opake and impenetrable, may he, with the Bible before his eyes, be groping in all the darkness and in more than all the guilt of heathenism. These sins infuse a sore and a deadly distemper into his organs of perception, and by every wilful repetition of them is the distemper more fixed and perpetuated—and therefore it is that we call upon those who desire for light, to cherish no hope whatever of its attainment, while they persist in any doings which they know to be wrong. We call upon them to frame their doings in turning to the Lord if they wish the veil to be taken away—and, instead of hesitating about the order of precedency between faith and practice, or about the way in which they each reciprocate upon the other, we call upon them simply and honestly to betake themselves to the apostolical order of "Awake, O sinner, and Christ shall give thee light."

There is another set of passages which may be quoted as a counterpart to the former, and which go to demonstrate the connection between obedience and spiritual light—even as the others prove a connection between sin and spiritual darkness. 'He who is desirous of doing God's will shall know of Christ's doctrine that it is of God.' 'He whose eye is single shall have the whole body full of light.' 'Light is sown unto the upright, and breaketh forth as the morning to those who judge the widow and the fatherless.' 'To him who hath, more shall

be given'—and 'he who keepeth my sayings, to him will I manifest myself.' These are testimonies which clearly bespeak, what ought to be the conduct of him who is in quest of spiritual manifestation. They will serve to guide the seeker in his way to that rest, which all attain who have attained an acquaintance with the unseen Creator. It is a rest which he labours to enter into—and, in despite of freezing speculation, does he turn the call of repentance to the immediate account of urging himself on to all deeds of conformity with the divine will, to all good and holy services.

But more than this. It is the Spirit who opens the understanding; and He is affected by the treatment which He receives from the subject on which He operates. It is true that He has been known at times to magnify the freeness of the grace of God, by arresting the sinner in the full speed and determination of his impetuous career; and turning him, in despite of himself, to the refuge and the righteousness of the gospel. But, speaking generally, He is grieved by resistance, He is quenched by carelessness, He is provoked by the constant baffling of His endeavours, to check and to convince and to admonish. On the other hand He is courted by compliance; He is encouraged by the favourable reception of His influences; He is given in larger measure to those who obey Him; and He follows up your docility under one dictate and one suggestion, by freer and fuller manifestations. In other words, if to thwart your conscience be to thwart Him, and if to act with your conscience be to act with Him—what is this to say, but that every

enquirer after the way of salvation, has something to do at the very outset in the furtherance of his object? What is this to say, but that a nascent concern about the soul should instantly be associated with a nascent activity in the prosecution of its interests? What is this to say, but that the man should, plainly and in good earnest, forthwith turn himself to all that is right? If he have been hitherto a drunkard, let him abandon his profligacies. If he have been hitherto a profaner of the Sabbath, let him abandon the habit of taking his own pleasure upon that day. If he have been hitherto a defrauder, let him abandon his deceits and his depredations. And though in that region of spiritual light upon which he is entering, he will learn that he never can be at peace with God till he lean on a better righteousness than his own—yet such is the influence of the doctrines of grace on every genuine enquirer, that, from the first dawning of his obscure perception of them, to the splendour of their full and finished manifestation, is there the breaking and the stir and the assiduous effort of a busy and ever-doing reformation—carrying him onwards from the more palpable rectitudes of ordinary and every-day conduct, to the high and sacred and spiritual elevation of a soul ripening for heaven, and following hard after God.

We know that we are now standing on the borders of controversy. But we are far more solicitous for such an impression as will lead you to act, than for any speculative adjustment. And yet how true it is, that, for the purpose of a practical effect, there is not one instrument so powerful and so pre-

vailing as the peculiar doctrine of the gospel. It is the belief that a debt unextinguishable by us has been extinguished by another—it is the knowledge that that God, who can never lay aside either His truth or His righteousness, has found out such a way for the dispensation of mercy as serves to exalt and to illustrate them both—it is the view of that great transaction by which He laid on His own Son the iniquities of us all, and has thus done away an otherwise invincible barrier which lay across the path of acceptance—it is the precious conviction that Christ has died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and thus has turned aside the penalties of a law, and by the very act wherewith He has magnified that law and made it honourable—It is this, which seen, however faintly by the eye of faith, which first looses the bond of despair, and gives a hope and an outlet for obedience. The subtile metaphysics of the question, about the order of succession with the two graces of faith and of repentance, may entertain or they may perplex you. But of this you may be very certain, that, where there is no repentance, all the dogmas of a contentious orthodoxy put together will never make out the reality of faith—and, where there is no faith, all the drudgeries of a most literal and laborious adherence to the outward matter of the law will never make out the reality of repentance.

Life is too short for controversy. Charged with all the urgency of a matter on hand, we tell you to turn and flee and make fast work of your preparation for a coming eternity. The sum and

substance of the preparation is, that you believe what the Bible tells you, and do what the Bible bids you. Bestir yourselves, for the last messenger is at the door. There is not time for cold criticisms, or laborious investigations, or splendid oratory, or profound argument—when death has broke loose amongst us, and is spreading his havoc amongst our earthly tabernacles—when he is wresting away from us the delights and the ornaments of our society upon earth—when he is letting us see, by examples the most affecting, of what frail and perishable materials human life is made up—and is dealing out another and another reproof to that accursed delay, which leads man to trifle on the brink of the grave, and to smile and be secure, while the weapons of mortality are flying thick around him. When will we be brought to the beginning of wisdom—to the fear of God—to the desire of doing His will—to the accomplishment of that desire, by our believing in the name of His only-begotten Son, and loving one another even as He has given us commandment? Let us work while it is day—and, set in motion by the encouragements of the gospel, let us instantly become the followers of them who through faith and patience are now inheriting the promises.

You occasionally meet in the New Testament, with an express reference to a certain body of writings, which are designated by the term of Scripture. We now apply this term to the whole Bible. But, in those days, it was restricted to that collection of pieces which makes up the Old Testa-

ment. For the New was only in the process of its formation, and was not yet completed; and it was not till some time after the evangelists wrote their narratives, and the apostles their communications, that they were gathered into one volume, or made to stand in equal and co-ordinate rank with the inspired books of the former dispensation.

So that all which is said of the Scriptures in the New Testament, must be regarded as the testimony of its authors to the value and importance of those writings which compose the Old Testament. And it would therefore appear from Paul's espistle to Timothy, that they are able to make us wise unto salvation.

There can be no doubt, however, that one ingredient of this ability is, that they refer us in a way so distinct and so authoritative to the events of the New Dispensation. They give evidence to the commission of our Saviour, and through Him to the commission of all His apostles. The wisdom which they teach, is a wisdom which would guide us forward to the posterior revelations of Christianity. The Old Testament is a region of comparative dimness. But still there is light enough there, for making visible the many indices which abound in it, to the more illuminated region of the New Testament—and, by sending us forward to that region, by pointing our way to Christ and to the apostles, by barely informing us where we are to get the wisdom that we are in quest of—even though it should not convey it to us by its own direct announcements, it may be said to be able to make us wise unto salvation.

The quotation taken in all its completeness is in full harmony, with the statement that we have now given. "From a child thou hast known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation, through the faith that is in Christ Jesus."

But there is more in it than this. The same light from Heaven by which the doctrine of the New Testament has been made visible, has also made more visible the same doctrine, which in the Old lay disguised under the veil of a still unfinished revelation. In the first blush of morning, there is much of the landscape that we cannot see at all—and much that we do see, but see imperfectly. The same ascending luminary which reveals to us those more distant tracts that were utterly unobserved, causes to start out into greater beauty and distinctness, the fields and the paths and the varied forms of nature or of art that are immediately around us—till we come to perceive an extended impress of the character and the goodness of the Divinity, over the whole range of our mid-day contemplation. It is thus with the Bible. That light, in virtue of which the pages of the New Testament have been disclosed to observation, has shed both a direct and a reflected splendour on the pages of the Old—insomuch that from certain chapters of Isaiah, which lay shrouded in mystery both from the prophet himself and from all his countrymen—as in reading of Him who bore the chastisement of our peace, and by whose stripes we are healed, and who poured out His soul unto the death, and made intercession for transgressors—we now draw all the

refreshing comfort that beams upon the heart, from an intelligent view of our Redeemer's work of mediation; and behold plainly standing out, that which lay wrapt, in a kind of hieroglyphic mantle, from the discernment of the wisest and most righteous of men under a former dispensation. This power of illumination reaches upward, beyond the confines of the letter of the New Testament; and throws an evangelical light upon the remotest parts of an economy which has now passed away. The rays of our brighter sun have fallen in a flood of glory over the oldest and most distant of our recorded intimations; and a Christian can now read the very first promise in the book of Genesis, that "the seed of the woman should bruise the head of the serpent," which only served to light up a vague and general expectation in the minds of our first parents—he can now read it with the same full intelligence and comfort, wherewith he reads in the book of the Romans that "the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly."

But there is still more in it than this. If there be any truth in the process whereby the Holy Spirit adds to the power of discernment, as well as to the truths which are to be discerned—then this increased power will enable us to see more—not merely in the later, but also in the earlier truths of revelation, than we would otherwise have done. It is like a blind man, in full and open day, gradually recovering his sight as he stands by the margin of a variegated parterre. Without any augmentation whatever of the external light, is there a progress of revelation to his senses, as to

all the beauty and richness and multiplicity of the objects which are before him. What he sees at first, may be no more then a kind of dazzling uniformity, over the whole length and breadth of that space which is inscribed with so many visible glories; and, afterwards, may plants and flowers stand out in their individuality to his notice; and then may the distinctive colours of each come to be recognized; and then, may the tints of minuter delicacy call forth his admiration—till all which it is competent for man to perceive, of what has been so profusely lavished by the hand of the great Artist, either in one general blush of loveliness, or in those nicer and more exquisite streaks of beauty which He hath pencilled in more hidden characters; on the specimens of flowers and foliage taken singly, shall all be perceived and all be rapturously enjoyed by the man, whose eyes have just been opened into a full capacity for beholding the wondrous things, which lie a spread and a finished spectacle before him. And it is the same with the Bible. That book which stands before the eye of many an accomplished disciple in this world's literature, as transfused throughout all its extent with one pervading and indiscriminate character of mysticism, gradually opens up to the eye of him who is rescued from the power of the god of this world, and whose office it is to blind the minds of them who believe not; and he beholds one general impress both of wisdom and of moral beauty upon the whole; and he forms a growing and more special intimacy with its individual passages; and feels a weight of significancy in many of them, which he never felt before;

and he is touched with the discernment of a precious adaptation in this one and that other verse to his own wants and his own circumstances; and this more minute and microscopic acquaintance with the truths, and perception of the excellencies of revelation, apply as much to the verses of the Old as it does to the verses of the New Testament —so that if he just grow in spiritual clear-sightedness, he will have as growing a relish and observation for the one part of Scripture as he has for the other: And thus it is, that, unlike to any human composition, an advancing Christian ever reads the Bible and the whole Bible, with a new light upon his understanding, and a new impression upon the affections and the principles of his nature. The books of the former dispensation never stand to him in place of the rudiments of a schoolboy, which he may now abandon. But written as they are for our admonition on whom the latter ends of the world have come; and, maintaining to this very hour the high functions and authority of a teacher, all whose sayings are given by inspiration from God, and all are profitable; and still instrumental, in the hands of the Spirit for conveying the whole light and power of His demonstrations into the understanding—let us rest assured that the Old Testament is one of the two olive trees planted in the house of God, and which is never to be removed; one of the two golden candlesticks lighted up for the church of Christ upon earth, and which while that church has being, will never be taken away.

It may illustrate this whole matter, if we look

to the book of Psalms, and just think of the various degrees of spirituality and enlargement with which the same composition may be regarded by Jewish and by Christian eyes—how in the praise which waiteth for God in Zion—and in the pleasure which His servants took in her stones, so that her very dust to them was dear—and in the preference which they made of one day in His courts to a thousand elsewhere—and in the thirsting of their souls to appear before God—and in their remembrance of that time when they went to His house with the voice of joy and praise, and with the multitude that kept holyday—and when exiles from the holy city, they were cast down in spirit, and cried from the depths of their banishment in the land of Jordan—and when longing for God, in a dry and thirsty land where no water was, they followed hard after the privilege of again seeing His power and His glory in the sanctuary—and in the songs of deliverance with which they celebrated their own restoration, when their bands were loosed, and their feet were set in a sure place, and they could offer their vows and their thanksgivings in the courts of the Lord's house, and "in the midst of thee, O Jerusalem"—In all this, a Jew might express the desires of a fainting and an affectionate heart, after that ceremonial in which he had been trained, and that service of the temple which he loved; and yet in all this, there is enough to sustain the loftiest flights of devotion in the mind of a Christian. There is a weight of expression, altogether commensurate to the feelings and the ardours and the extacies of a soul exercised unto

godliness. There is a something to meet the whole varied experience of the spiritual life, in these ages of a later and more refined dispensation. And such is the divine skilfulness of these compositions, that, while so framed as to suit and to satisfy the disciples of a ritual and less enlightened worship, there is not a holy and heavenly disciple of Jesus in our day, who will not perceive in the effusions of the Psalmist, a counterpart to all the alternations of his own religious history—who will not find in his very words, the fittest vehicles for all the wishes and sorrows and agitations to which his own heart is liable—and thus be taught by a writer far less advanced in spirituality than himself, the best utterance of desire for the manifestation of God's countenance, the best utterance of gratitude for the visitations of spiritual joy, the best and most expressive prayers under the distress and darkness of spiritual abandonment.

Let us read over without any comment the whole of the 84th Psalm—and just simply ask you to consider how those very materials which form a most congenial piece of devotion for a Jew, admit of being so impregnated with the life and spirit of a higher economy, that they are able to sustain all the views, and to express all the aspirations of the most spiritual and exercised Christian.

"How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts! My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the Lord; my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God. Yea, the sparrow hath found an house, and the swallow a nest for herself, where she may lay her young, even thine

altars, O Lord of hosts, my King, and my God. Blessed are they that dwell in thy house; they will be still praising thee. Blessed is the man whose strength is in thee; in whose heart are the ways of them: who passing through the valley of Baca make it a well; the rain also filleth the pools. They go from strength to strength; every one of them in Zion appeareth before God. O Lord God of hosts, hear my prayer: give ear, O God of Jacob. Behold, O God our shield, and look upon the face of thine anointed. For a day in thy courts is better than a thousand. I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness. For the Lord God is a sun and shield; the Lord will give grace and glory: no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly. O Lord of hosts, blessed is the man that trusteth in thee."

We think it necessary to say thus much—lest the Old Testament should ever be degraded below its rightful place in your estimation—lest any of you should turn away from it, as not fitted to aliment the faith and the holiness of those, who lie under a better and a brighter dispensation—lest you should abstain from the habit of reading that letter of the Old Testament, which is abundantly capable of being infused with the same evangelical spirit, that gives all its power to the letter of the New Testament. And be assured, that, if you want to catch in all its height and in all its celestial purity the raptures of a sustained and spiritual intercourse with Him who sitteth upon the throne, we know nothing fitter to guide your ascending

way, than those psalms and those prophecies, which shone at one time in a dark place; but may now, upon the earnest heed of him who attentively regards them, cause the day to dawn and the day-star to arise in his heart.

In turning now to one of the fullest expositions of Christian doctrine which is to be found in the New Testament; and which was drawn up for the edification of the most interesting of the early churches; and where, in the conduct of his argument, Paul seems to have been fully aware of all those elements both of intolerance and philosophy which were in array against him; and where, as his manner was, he suits and manages his reasoning, with the full consciousness of the kind and metal of resistance that were opposed to him; and where he had to steer his dexterous way through a heterogeneous assemblage of Gentiles on the one hand, enlightened up to the whole literature and theology of the times, and of Jews on the other, most fiercely and proudly tenacious of that sectarianism which they regarded as their national glory—in such an epistle, written in such circumstances by the accomplished Paul, when we may be sure he would bring up his efforts to the greatness of the occasion, it is natural to look for all the conviction and all the light that such an able and intellectual champion is fitted to throw over the cause which he has undertaken. And yet what would be the result in a discussion of science or politics or law, we will not find to be the result in a discussion of Christianity, without such a preparation and such an accompaniment as are not essential to our pro-

gress in this world's scholarship. To be a disciple in the school of Christ, there must be an affectionate embracing of truth with the heart; and there must be a knowledge which puffeth not up, but humbles and edifies; and there must be a teaching of the Spirit of God, distinct from all those unsanctified acquirements, which we labour to win and to defend, in the strife it may be of logical contention. For, let it be observed, that the wisdom of the New Testament is characterized by moral attributes. It is pure and peaceable and gentle, and easy to be entreated, and full of mercy and good fruits, and without partiality and without hypocrisy. Let us not confound the illumination of natural argument, with that which warms the heart as well as informs the understanding—for it is a very truth, that the whole demonstration of orthodoxy may be assented to by him, who is not spiritual but carnal. And while we are yet on the threshold of by far the mightiest and closest of those demonstrations, that ever were offered to the world, let us bow "the knee to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, that he would grant us, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man; that Christ may dwell in our hearts by faith; that, being rooted and grounded in love, we may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height, and to know the love of Christ which passeth all knowledge, that we may be filled with all the fulness of God."

LECTURE II.

ROMANS, i, 1—7.

Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God, (which he had promised afore by his prophets in the holy Scriptures,) concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh; and declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead: by whom we have received grace and apostleship, for obedience to the faith among all nations, for his name: among whom are ye also the called of Jesus Christ: To all that be in Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints, Grace to you and peace from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ."

We now enter upon the work of exposition.

People, in reading the Bible, are often not conscious of the extreme listlessness with which they pass along the familiar and oft repeated words of Scripture, without the impression of their meaning being at all present with the thoughts—and how, during the mechanical currency of the verses through their lips, the thinking power is often asleep for whole passages together. And you will therefore allow me, at least at the commencement of this lectureship, first to read over a paragraph; and then to fasten the import of certain of its particular phrases upon your attention, even though these phrases may heretofore have been regarded as so intelligible, that you never thought of bestowing an effort or dwelling one moment upon their signification; and then of reading the passage over again, in such extended or such substituted language, as

may give us another chance of the sense of it, at least being rivetted on your understandings. We shall generally endeavour to press home upon you, in the way of application, some leading truth or argument which may occur in any such portion of the epistle as we may have been enabled to overtake.

Ver. 1. "Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God."

'An apostle'—one who is sent, one who obtains, not a commission to do, but a commission to go—"Go and preach the Gospel unto every creature." Jesus Christ is an apostle—because sent—and is therefore called not merely the High Priest, but the Apostle of our profession. God sent His Son unto the world. The call of Paul you read of several times in the Acts, both in the direct narrative of that book, and in his own account of it. And it is to be remarked that as he got his commission in a peculiar way, so he evidently feels himself more called upon than the other apostles, to assert and to vindicate its authenticity.

'Separated unto'—set apart to a particular work. You know that holiness, in its original meaning, just signifies separation from the mass. It is thus that the vessels of the temple are holy—it is thus that the terms, common and unclean, are held, in the language of the ceremonial law, to be synonymous. And it is thus that the devoting, or setting apart of an apostle to his office, is expressed by the consecration of him to it, and even, in one part of the New Testament, by the sanctifying of him to it. This explains a passage that might be otherwise difficult, John, xvii, 17–19. "Sanctify them

through thy truth: thy word is truth. As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world. And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified though the truth." To sanctify here is not applied to the personal but the official character. It is not to moralize the heart, but merely to set apart to an employment; and thus bears application to the Apostle Christ, as to the apostles whom He was addressing.

'Gospel,' a message of good news.

Ver. 2. "Which he had promised afore by his prophets in the holy Scriptures."

'Which' refers to gospel—which gospel He had promised.

Ver. 3. "Concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh."

This verse gives us the subject of the message, or what the message is about—or, omitting the second verse as a parenthesis, 'separated unto the work of promulgating God's message of good news, about His Son Jesus Christ our Lord.' The phrase 'which was made' might have been rendered 'which became' of the seed of David in respect of His flesh, or His human nature. He took it upon Him. He received from this descent all that other men receive of natural faculty—or, in other words, the term flesh comprehends the human soul as well as the human body of our Redeemer. 'According to' is, 'in respect of.'

Ver. 4. "And declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead."

'Declared' or determinately marked out to be Son of God and with power. The thing was demonstrated by an evidence, the exhibition of which required a putting forth of power, which Paul in another place represents as a very great and strenuous exertion. "According to the working of his mighty power when he raised him from the dead." 'The Spirit of holiness'—or the Holy Spirit. It was through the operation of the Holy Spirit, that the divine nature was infused into the human at the birth of Jesus Christ; and the very same agent, it is remarkable, was employed in the work of the resurrection. "Put to death in the flesh," says Peter, "and quickened by the Spirit." We have only to do with the facts of the case. He was demonstrated to be the Son of God, by the power of the Spirit having been put forth in raising Him from the dead.

Ver. 5. "By whom we have received grace and apostleship, for obedience to the faith among all nations, for his name."

'Grace,' sometimes signifies the kindness which prompts a gift, and sometimes the gift itself. We say that we receive kindness from a man, when, in fact, all that we can personally and bodily lay hold of, is the fruit of his kindness. Here it signifies the fruit—a spiritual gift—ability, in fact, to discharge the office of an apostleship, or other duties attached to an apostle's commission. He laboured with success at this vocation, because he could strive mightily according to His working that wrought in him mightily. This commission was granted to him for the purpose of producing an obedience

to the faith among all nations, for the purpose of rendering all nations obedient unto the faith—and all this for the further purpose of magnifying His name.

Ver. 6. "Among whom are ye also the called of Jesus Christ."

'Called' externally—if addressing the whole church, of whom it is very possible that some may not have been called effectually. Or if restricted as in the following verse, only the latter—though he might presume to address all in visible communion with the church as beloved of God and as called to be saints.

Ver. 7. "To all that be in Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ." Loving kindness to you is manifested in those peculiar influences which the Spirit confers on believers; and either real peace, or a sense of it in your hearts, from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

So minute an exposition may not be called for afterwards: we may not therefore persevere in it long. We have now gone in detail over the words that seemed to require it, to prepare the way for repeating the whole passage to you, either in extended or in substituted language. But before we do so, we would bid you remark a peculiarity, which we often meet with in the compositions of this apostle. He deals very much in what might be called the excursive style. One word often suggests to him a train of digression from the main current of his argument; and a single word of that

train often suggests to him another; and thus [illegible] he accumulate one subsequent clause of [illegible] upon a foregoing; and branches out in [illegible] successive departures, till, after a period of indulgence in this way of it, he recalls himself and falls in again to the capital stream of his observations. The interval between the first and seventh verses may be looked to, as filled up with a set of parentheses; and they will read therefore very well in succession. 'Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God, to all that be in Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints: grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.' In like manner, several of the intermediate verses are capable of being omitted, without breaking the line of continuity. But the occurrence of the term Gospel at the end of the first verse, is followed up in the second by his mention of the antiquity of it, and in the third by his mention of the subject of it; and in this verse the single introduction of our Saviour's name, leads him to assert in this and the following verse His divine and human natures, and to state in the fifth verse that from Him he had received a commission to preach unto all nations, and to instance in the sixth verse the people whom he was addressing as one of these nations. And it is not till after he has completed this circle of deviations, but at the same time enriched the whole of its course with the effusions of a mind stored in the truths of revelation, that he resumes in the seventh that rectilineal track, by which the writer who announced himself in the first verse, sends in

the seventh his Christian salutations to the correspondents whom he is addressing.

We conclude with the following paraphrase.

'Paul a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, and set apart to the work of conveying God's message of good tidings—which message He had promised before in His holy Scriptures, and which message relates to His Son Jesus Christ our Lord, who in respect of His human nature, was descended of David—but was evinced to be descended of God in respect of that divine nature with which the Holy Spirit impregnated His humanity at the first; and which He afterwards, by His power, still associated with His humanity, in raising Him from the dead. By this Jesus Christ have I received the favour to be an apostle, and ability for the office of spreading obedience unto the faith among all nations for the glory of His name. Among these nations are ye Romans also the called of Jesus Christ, and to all of you in Rome, beloved of God, and called to be saints, do I wish grace and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.'

LECTURE III.

ROMANS, i, 8—17.

"First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, that your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world. For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of his Son, that without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayers; making request if by any means now at length I might have a prosperous journey by the will of God to come unto you. For I long to see you, that I may impart unto you some spiritual gift, to the end ye may be established; that is, that I may be comforted together with you by the mutual faith both of you and me. Now I would not have you ignorant, brethren, that oftentimes I purposed to come unto you, (but was let hitherto,) that I might have some fruit among you also, even as among other Gentiles. I am a debtor both to the Greeks and to the Barbarians, both to the wise and to the unwise. So, as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the Gospel to you that are at Rome also. For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith."

It does not require much in the way of exposition to set forth the meaning of these verses. The spiritual gift, mentioned in the 11th verse, is one of those gifts by the Holy Ghost, which the apostles had it in their power to transmit to their disciples—a power which seems to have signalized them above all the Christians of that period. Many could speak tongues, and work miracles; but they could not make others either speak tongues or work miracles. The gifts themselves it was competent for them to have, but not the faculty of

communicating them. This seems to have been the peculiar prerogative of apostles—which Simon Magus desired to have, but could not purchase. It was thus, perhaps, that an apostolical visit was necessary for the introduction of these powers into any church or congregation of Christians; and, if so, we would infer that the season of miracles must have passed away with those Christians, who had been in personal contact with, and were the immediate descendants of the apostles of our Lord. They left the gift of miracles behind them—but if they did not leave the power of transmitting this gift behind them, it might have disappeared with the dying away of all those men on whom they had actually laid their hands.

In the 14th verse, the phrase 'I am debtor,' may be turned into the phrase—'I am bound' or 'I am under obligation,' laid upon me by the duties of my office, to preach both to Greeks and Barbarians, both to the wise and the unwise. "Woe unto me if I preach not the Gospel"—a necessity is laid upon me.

The only other phrase that requires explanation, and about which indeed there is a difference of interpretation, is in the 17th verse—'from faith to faith.' There is one sense assigned to this expression, very consistent certainly with the general truth of the gospel—but which can scarcely be admitted in this place, save by that kind of hurried acquiescence, which is too often rendered on the part of those, who like no better way of disposing of a passage than to get over it easily. The righteousness of God is certainly that, in which He hath

appointed us sinners to appear before Him; and which is the only righteousness that He will accept of at our hands, as our meritorious title to His favour and friendship. Now it is very true, that this righteousness becomes ours wholly by faith, that by faith it is received on our part, and by faith it is retained on our part; and that neither works before faith, nor works after it, have any part in our justification—and that, therefore, it is not by passing onwards from faith to works that we further the concern of our justifying righteousness before God; but only by holding fast the beginning of our confidence even unto the end, and not casting it away; and if there be any lack in our faith, perfecting that which is lacking therein—so that it may hold true of us, as it did of the primitive Christians, of whom it was recorded that their faith groweth exceedingly. And with these views in their mind, do some hold, that the righteousness of God being revealed from faith to faith, signifies that as it is made known and discerned at first in the act of our believing, so the revelation of it becomes more distinct and manifest, just as the faith becomes stronger—the things to be discerned being seen in greater brightness and evidence, as the organ of discernment grows in clearness and power—not, so they, from faith unto works, but from faith to faith—marking what is very true, that our righteousness before God, regarded as the giver of a perfect and incommutable law, is wholly by faith.

Notwithstanding however of all the undoubted truth and principle which stand associated with

this interpretation, we think that there are others more simple and obvious. Paul had already spoken of a transmission of faith from himself to those whom he was addressing, and of a constant mutual faith between himself and them; and he tells us elsewhere of faith coming by hearing, and asks how can people believe unless preachers be sent; and he announces his determination to preach the gospel to those who are in Rome also; and professes his own faith in the gospel, under the affirmation that he is not ashamed of it; and declares its great subject to be the righteousness of God, revealed, as some are disposed to understand it, from the faith of the preacher to the faith of the hearers. Others would have it to mean that this righteousness is revealed by the faithfulness of God, to the faith of men.

But to our mind the best interpretation is obtained by conjoining the term righteousness with the phrase in question. For therein is revealed, the righteousness of God from faith, to faith. We shall thus have revealed in the gospel, δικαιοσυνη εκ του πιστεως, which is the righteousness from of or by faith; and the gift of which is εις πιστιν or to faith. This is quite at one with the affirmation of a subsequent passage, that "the righteousness which is by faith of Jesus Christ is unto all and upon all that believe," or the righteousness which is by faith is unto those who have the faith. As it is written, the righteous live, or hold that life which was forfeited under the law and is restored to them under the gospel, by faith.

We now offer the following paraphrase.

'First I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, that your faith is in the mouths of all. For God whom I serve with my whole heart, in the business that He has committed to me of forwarding His Son's gospel, can testify that I never cease to make mention of you in all my prayers—making request, if it now be possible in any way, that I may at length, after unlooked for delay, have with His will a prosperous journey to you at Rome. For I long to see you, that I may in person and as a sign of my apostleship, impart to you some gift of the Holy Ghost, in order to confirm your minds in the faith of this gospel. Or rather, that I may be comforted, as well as you be confirmed, by the exercises and the sympathies of our mutual faith. Now you must know, brethren, that it has been long my purpose to come to you, but have hitherto been prevented, that I might have some effects of my ministry among you also, even as among the other nations where I have laboured. I have not yet visited the seat of philosophy, nor come into contact with its refined and literary people. But I count myself as much bound to declare the gospel to Greeks, or to men of Attic cultivation and acquirement, as to rude and ignorant barbarians—as much to the learned in this world's wisdom, as to the unlearned. So that, as far as it lies with me, I am quite in readiness to preach the gospel even to you who are at Rome. For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ—and, in the work of declaring it, am as ready to face the contempt and the self-sufficiency of science, as to go round with it among those more docile and

acquiescing tribes of our species, who have less of fancied wisdom in themselves with which to confront it. For it is the power of God unto the salvation of all who believe. It is that, which, however judged and despised as a weak instrument by the men of this world, it is that to which He, by His power, gives effect for the recovery of that life which all men had forfeited and lost by sin—and which can only be restored by a righteousness which will do away the whole effect of this sin. Whosoever believeth in the gospel shall be saved, by having this life rendered back to him, whether he be Jew or Greek. For the gospel makes known the righteousness appointed by God—a righteousness by faith, and which is unto all who have faith—as it is written that the righteous, and those only are so who have that righteousness which God will accept, have it unto spiritual life here and unto eternal life hereafter by faith.'

It will not be our general practice to embarrass you with many interpretations of the same passage; and we do it at present, only for the purpose of ushering in the following observation. There do occur a few ambiguous phrases in Scripture; and this is quite consistent with such a state of revelation there, as that the great and essential truths which are unto salvation shall stand as clearly and as legibly on the face of the evangelical record, as if written with a sun-beam. And whereas there may enter into your minds a feeling of insecurity, when you behold men of scholarship at variance about the meaning of one of those doubtful expressions; we call you to remark how much the contro-

versy between them, is, in many instances, restricted merely to what the subject of the expression is, and not to what the doctrine of the Bible is upon that subject. Thus controversialists may all be at one about the scriptural doctrine on every given topic, though they may not be at one as to the question—what is the topic which in this particular clause is here adverted to. The first class of interpreters, about the meaning of the ambiguous phrase in the 17th verse of this chapter, may think that it relates to the doctrine of our justification being wholly of faith; and that it retains this as its alone footing, throughout the whole course of an advanced Christian, as he makes progress both in faith and in the works of righteousness; and they may not think that it relates to the topic assigned, either by the second or third class of interpreters; and yet they may be entirely at one with both, in the judgment and understanding they have on each of the topics—concurring with the second in the general truth that a frequent and established way for the propagation of faith in the world, is by its passing from him who speaks to him who listens, and who in the act of listening becomes a believer—and concurring also with the third in their general principle, that the righteousness appointed by God for a sinner to appear in His presence, is constituted, not by working but by believing, and that it is transferred as a possession unto all who believe. They, one and all of them, may have the same mind upon the same topics—because shone upon in the same way, by the light of many other express and undoubted

testimonies about these topics, which lie up and down in the Bible; and the only question of disputation between them may be, which of these particular topics happens to be the theme of the apostle in the passage before us—a very subordinate question, you will observe, to that more vital and essential one, which relates to the meaning of an article of faith—a question about which there may be varieties of sentiment among men, who are substantially at one in all that relates to the doctrines of Christianity. And we think that it ought to quell your apprehensions, and to reduce the estimate you may have previously made of those controversies among good men, which some would represent as quite endless and inextricable, when you are thus made to understand, that, in a very great number of cases they refer, not to what the whole amount of the Bible testimony is about this one or that other portion of the theological creed—but to what the position is which is specially taken up or adverted to in some of the incidental or subordinate passages. There is nothing to alarm or to unsettle in those lesser diversities which we are now alluding to. Nay it ought rather to establish your confidence, when you see that these diversities are held by the very men who hold the great principles of Christianity in common—by men who, in thus dissenting from each other on particular passages, evince that to each of them there belongs the habit of independent thinking—and who thus stamp the value of so many distinct and independent testimonies, on those great doctrines which they have received from the light of many

passages, and by which they are united in the profession of one Faith and one Lord and one Baptism.

A controversy about the doctrine of a particular passage is one thing. A controversy about the truth of a particular doctrine is another. The one implies a difference of understanding, about the sense of one passage. The other may imply a difference of understanding, about the general voice and testimony of Scripture as made up of many passages.

Let us now pass on from our exposition of the meaning of words, to our application of the matter that is conveyed by them. And here we have only time to advert to the affection and the strenuousness with which the apostolic mind of Paul gave itself up to apostolic business—how he rebukes by his example those who make the work of winning souls to Christ a light and superficial concern—how his whole man seems to have been engrossed by it—making it a matter of gratitude when he heard of its prosperity—making it a matter of prayer when he desired its furtherance—making it a matter of active personal exertion when it required his presence or his labour. To this work he gave himself wholly; and, by adding prayer to the ministry of the word, teaches us how much the effect of this ministry is due to those special influences, which are called down from Heaven by the urgency of special applications sent up from believers in the world. There is one trait of his mind, which frequently breaks out in his communications with his own converts. He is sometimes

obliged to affirm his apostolic superiority over them, or to say something which implies it. But it is evident how much he recoils from such an assumption; and how it sets him to the expressions and the expedients of delicacy, with a view to soften the disparity between himself and his disciples; and how he likes to address them in the terms of equal and friendly companionship—dropping upon all possible occasions the character of the teacher in that of the fellow-Christian; and never feeling so comfortable in his intercourse with them, as when he places himself on the level of their common hopes and common sympathies and common infirmities. It is altogether, we apprehend, such a movement of humility on the part of Paul, that lies at the transition from the eleventh verse which signalizes him above the whole church, to the twelfth which brings him down to a participation of the same faith and the same comfort with them all.

We shall not at present, bring forth any remark on a phrase, which occurs frequently in this epistle, 'the righteousness of God'—for we shall have a freer and a fuller opportunity of doing so afterwards. But let us not pass over the intrepidity of Paul, in the open and public avowal of his Christianity. We call it intrepidity, though he speaks not here of having to encounter violence, but only of having to encounter shame. For, in truth, it is often a higher effort and evidence of intrepidity, to front disgrace, than it is to front danger. There is many a man who would march up to the cannon's mouth for the honour of his

country—yet would not face the laugh of his companions for the honour of his Saviour. We doubt not that there are individuals here present, who if Turkish armada were wafted on the wings of conquest to our shores, and the ensigns of Mahomet were proudly to wave over the fallen faith of our ancestors, and they were plied with all the devices of eastern cruelty to abjure the name of Christian, and do homage to the false prophet—there are individuals here, whose courage would bear them in triumph through such a scene of persecuting violence; and yet whose courage fails them every day, in the softer scenes of their social and domestic history. The man who under the excitements of a formal and furious persecution, were brave enough to be a dying witness to the truth as it is in Jesus, crouches into all the timidity of silence under the omnipotency of fashion; and ashamed of the Saviour and His words, recoils in daily and familiar conversation from the avowals of a living witness for His name. There is as much of the truly heroic in not being ashamed of the profession of the gospel, as in not being afraid of it. Paul was neither: and yet when we think of what he once was in literature; and how aware he must have been of the loftiness of its contempt for the doctrine of a crucified Saviour; and that in Rome the whole power and bitterness of its derisions were awaiting him; and that the main weapon with which he had to confront it was such an argument as looked to be foolishness to the wisdom of this world—we doubt not that the disdain inflicted by philosophy, was naturally as formidable to the mind of this

apostle, as the death inflicted by the arm of bloody violence. So that even now, and in an age when Christianity has no penalties and no proscriptions to keep her down, still, if all that deserves the name of Christianity be exploded from conversation —if a visible embarrassment run through a company, when its piety or its doctrine is introduced among them—if, among beings rapidly moving towards immortality, any serious allusion to the concerns of immortality stamps an oddity on the character of him who brings it forward—if, through a tacit but firm compact which regulates the intercourse of this world, the gospel is as effectually banished from the ordinary converse of society, as by the edicts of tyranny the profession of it was banished in the days of Claudius from Rome:— then he who would walk in his Christian integrity among the men of this lukewarm and degenerate age—he who would do all and say all in the name of Jesus—he who, in obedience to his Bible, would season with grace and with that which is to the use of edifying the whole tenor of his communications—he, in short, who, rising above that meagre and mitigated Christianity, which is as remote as Paganism from the real Christianity of the New Testament, would, out of the abundance of his heart, without shrinking and without shame, speak of the things which pertain to the kingdom of God—he will find that there are trials still, which, to some temperaments, are as fierce and as fiery as any in the days of martyrdom; and that, however in some select and peculiar walk he may find a few to sympathise with him, yet many are the

families and many are the circles of companionship, where the persecution of contempt calls for determination as strenuous, and for firmness as manly, as ever in the most intolerant ages of our church did the persecution of direct and personal violence.

And let it be remarked too, that, in becoming a Christian now, the same transition is to be made from one style of sentiment to another, which was made by the apostle. It is as much the effort of nature, as it ever was of a corrupt and ignorant Judaism, to seek to establish a righteousness of its own; and, in passing from a state of nature to that of grace, there must still be a renouncing of that righteousness, and a transference of our trust and of our entire dependence to another. Now, in the act of making that passage, there is also the very same encounter with this world's ridicule and observation, which the apostle had to brave; and which, on the strength of right and resolute principle, the apostle overcame. The man who hopes to get to heaven by a good life, and who professes himself to be secure on the strength of his many virtues and his many decencies, and who dislikes both the mystery and the seriousness which stand associated with the doctrine of salvation by faith alone—such a man has no more Christianity, than what he may easily and familiarly show—and in sporting such sentiments, even among the most giddy and unthinking of this world's generations, he will neither disgrace himself by singularity, nor be resisted as the author of any invasion whatever on the general style and spirit of this world's com-

panies. But should he pass from this condition, which is neither more nor less than that of a Pharisee in disguise; and, struck by a sense of spiritual nakedness, flee for refuge to another righteousness than his own; and seek for justification by faith, a privilege which is rendered to faith; and profess now, that he hopes to get to heaven by the obedience unto death which has been rendered for him by the great Mediator—such a style of utterance as this, would serve greatly more to peculiarize a man among the conversations of society—and these are the words of Christ of which he is greatly apt to be more ashamed. A temptation meets him here, which no doubt met the apostle, when his Christianity first came to be known among those follow-students who had been trained along with him at the feet of Gamaliel; and it is at that point when, for the Jewish principle of self-righteousness he adopts the evangelical principle of justification by faith—it is then that he becomes more an outcast than before, from the toleration and the sympathy of unconverted men.

Let the same consideration uphold such that upheld the mind of the apostle. All that you possibly can do, for the purpose of substantiating a claim upon Heaven, is but the weakness of man, idly straining after a salvation which he will miss. Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ; and, however simple the expedient, the power and the promise of God are on the side of your obtaining salvation which will certainly be accomplished. The Syrian was affronted when told to dip himself in Jordan for the cure of his leprosy; and to many in like

manner is it a subject of offence, when told to wash out their sins in the blood of the atonement—calling on the name of the Lord. But the same power which gave efficacy to the one expedient, gives efficacy to the other; and in such a way too, as to invest that method of salvation which looks meanness and foolishness to the natural eye—to invest it with the solemn venerable imposing character of God's asserted majesty, of God's proclaimed and vindicated righteousness.

And here let us remark the whole import of the term salvation. The power of God in the achievement of it was put forth in something more than in bowing down the Divinity upon our world, and there causing it to sustain the burden of the world's atonement—in something more than the conflicts of the garden or the agonies of the cross—in something more than the resurrection of the crucified Saviour from His tomb—in something more than the consequent expunging of every believer's name from the book of condemnation, and the inscribing of it in the book of life. There is a power put forth on the person of believers. There is the working of a mighty power to usward who believe. There is the achievement of a spiritual resurrection upon every one of them. By the sprinkling of the blood of Christ, the power of which is applied to every soul that has faith, there is a cleansing of that soul from its moral and spiritual leprosy. And hence a connection between two things, which to the world's eye looks incomprehensible—a connection between faith, which it might be feared would have led to indolent security on the one hand,

and a most thorough substantial pervading reformation of heart and conduct on the other. The expedient does not appear a likely one to the eye of nature. But the power of God stamps an efficacy upon it; and He has multiplied in all ages of the church the living examples of marked and illustrious virtue in the person of believers; and has held them forth to the world as trophies of the power of the gospel; and has put to silence the gainsayers; and afforded matter of glory to the friends of the truth; and upheld them in the principle and purpose not to be ashamed of it.

We conclude with that awful denunciation of the Saviour. "He who is ashamed of me before this evil and adulterous generation, of him will I be ashamed before my holy angels."

In the last clause 'the just shall live by faith'—we are apt to conceive of justice as a personal and inherent attribute. In the original, the term for just has the same root with the term for righteousness—and this strengthens our impression of the true meaning here, which is, that they who are righteous with the righteousness of God, mentioned in the same verse, and who in virtue of being so have a title and a security for life, hold that life by faith.

LECTURE IV.

ROMANS, i, 18—24.

"For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness. Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath showed it unto them. For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse: because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things. Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves."

THE word translated here 'to hold,' signifies not merely to hold, but to hold fast. Now this may be done for the purpose of keeping in secure possession that which you wish to retain. And so this is the word in that place where they who receive the word are said to "*keep* it, and bring forth fruit with patience[1];" and where the Corinthians are praised by Paul because they observed "to remember him in all things, and to *keep* the ordinances which he had delivered them[2];" and where he tells them, that they are saved if they "*keep* in memory that which he had preached unto them[3];" and where he bids the Thessalonians "*hold*

[1] Luke, viii, 15. [2] 1 Cor. xi, 2. [3] 1 Cor. xv, 2.

fast that which is good[1];" and where he informs the Hebrews, that Christ dwelleth in them, if they "*hold fast* the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end[2];" and also that we are made partakers of Christ, if "we hold the beginning of our confidence stedfast unto the end[3];" and finally, where he encourages them to "hold fast the profession of their faith without wavering.[4]" It is not in the sense of the word in any of these passages that we are to understand it here. They who hold the truth in unrighteousness, do not hold it for the sake of keeping it in possession, as an article which they valued; and therefore were desirous of retaining in safe and cherished custody.

Or one may hold fast for the purpose of confining or keeping down, so as to impede and repress that which is thus confined, from the putting forth of its energies. And accordingly this is the very word which Paul uses, when he says to the Thessalonians, "And now ye know what *withholdeth*, that he might be revealed in his time. For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now *letteth* will let, until he be taken out of the way.[5]" He alludes to something that so confined Antichrist, as to keep him back—so that he came not out into full and immediate manifestation. It is in this second sense that men hold the truth in unrighteousness. They have the truth—they are in possession of it. But they keep it down. They chain it, as it were, in the prison-hold of their own

[1] 1 Thess. v, 21. [2] Hebrews, iii, 6. [3] Hebrews, iii, 14.
[4] Hebrews, x, 23. [5] 2 Thess. ii, 6, 7.

corruptions. They throw the troublesome adviser into a dungeon—just like a man who has a conscience to inform him of what is right, but who stifles its voice, and brings it under bondage to the domineering ascendancy of passion and selfishness and all the lawless appetites of his nature. Thus it is with men who restrain the truth, or suppress the truth in unrighteousness.

Ver. 19. 'That which is knowable of God, is manifest among them.'

Ver. 20. 'For ever since the creation of the world, that great manifestation of God's power and Godhead, these invisible things of Him are clearly seen.'

Ver. 21. 'In their reasonings.'

The following then is the paraphrase of this passage. 'For the wrath of God is revealed from Heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who stifle the truth in unrighteousness. Because that which might be known of God is manifest among them—for God hath shown it to them. For the invisible things respecting Him, even His eternal power and Godhead, are clearly seen—being discernible from the things that are made, so as to render them inexcusable. Because when they did know God, they did not do Him glory as to God, neither were they thankful to Him; but departing from the grave and solemn and simple reliance that was due to the Creator, they went into vain reasonings about Him, and so changed the truth into a deceitful imagination, and their foolish heart was darkened. In the profession, and in the prosecution of wisdom, they became

fools: And changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four-footed beasts and creeping things.'

Our first remark on the subject-matter of this passage, is founded on the way, in which the revelation of the righteousness of God unto faith, stands as a counterpart to the revelation of the wrath of God unto all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men. The wrath is not an element framed or fermented upon earth. It is conceived in heaven; and thence it cometh down on the unrighteousness of men, as the subject of it. And as with the wrath of God, so it is with the righteousness of God. It too cometh down from heaven in the shape of a descending ministration. It is no more the righteousness of man in the one case, than it is the wrath of man in the other. It is affirmed here, and most prominently referred to in other parts of the epistle, as the righteousness of God. The wrath has its origin in the breast of the Divinity; and it goeth forth from an upper storehouse, from a quarter above our world and foreign to our world; and all that the world furnishes is the reservoir into which it is poured—the unrighteousness and the ungodliness of men, which form the fit subjects for its application. And there is not an individual man who is not a fit subject of it. The wrath is unto all unrighteousness; and there is none who has not fallen into some unrighteousness. All who do these things are worthy of death; and there is not a human creature who has not done one or more of these things.

But there is a way, it would appear, in which they who are thought worthy of death and are under the wrath of God, may nevertheless be made to live. They die by the wrath of God being inflicted on them. They live by the righteousness of God being administered to them. The one is just as much the rendering of a foreign application as the other. In the one case there is a displicency at sin on the part of the Godhead; and this bodies itself into a purpose of vengeance against the sinner; and the infliction of it is sent forth from God's remote and lofty sanctuary, originating there, and coming down from thence upon the unrighteousness of man. And as with the wrath of God ministered unto the world, so it is with the righteousness of God which is ministered unto the world. It has all a separate existence in the upper courts of heaven. It is no more man's righteousness in the one case, than it is man's wrath in the other. There was a ransom found out by God. There was a surety accepted by God. There was a satisfaction which that surety rendered. There was an obedience undertaken for us by one who inhabited eternity; and with this obedience God was well pleased. There was a righteousness which He could acknowledge. There was a duteous and devoted offering, which to Him was the incense of a sweet-smelling savour. There was a virtue which shone in spotless lustre even to His pure and penetrating eye; and a merit which not only met the demand of His holy law, but magnified that law and made it honourable. And all this apart from any obedience of ours. All this the produce of a transaction in

which we had no share. All this a treasure existing in the repositories of that place, where the Father and the Son hold their ineffable communion—a righteousness not rendered by us, but rendered to us; and which is the only one that God can look unto with complacency. This is the righteousness of God, standing altogether aloof and separable from the righteousness of man; and which He offers to administer to us all, in place of that wrath which, upon our refusal of His better offer, He will administer. And the way in which both the wrath and the righteousness are set before us in this passage, as being each of them a descending ministration—the one of them being as purely a dispensation from Heaven as the other—should prepare us for the still more pointed asseverations of the apostle, when he tells us that the righteousness upon which we are accepted is altogether of God, and borrows not one particle of its worth from the obedience of man; that it comes upon us in the shape of a previous and a prepared grant, which we are simply to lay hold of; that we are not the authors of it, but simply the subjects of it: And much is to be gathered from the information, that, like as the wrath of God is unto man's unrighteousness, so the righteousness of God is unto man's faith.

The question is, Whether that thing on which we are justified is the righteousness of Christ alone accepted by God, and therefore called the righteousness of God, and rendered ours upon our receiving it by faith—or, Whether it be the righteousness of man as alone or in part the plea of man's justification. It will be found in the sequel, how strenu-

ously and how unreservedly the apostle cleaves to the former term of this alternative; and in this opening passage of his Epistle, does he afford us no obscure or unsatisfying glimpse of that doctrine, on which lie suspended the firmest securities of our peace in this world, and the dearest hopes of our eternity.

The next thing to which we direct your attention, is the precise reason that is intimated to us here, of God's provocation with man. There is something in the principle of His anger, which accords with what we experience of the movement of anger in our own bosoms. An infant or an animal may do an action which is materially wrong, without calling forth our resentment. It is the knowing it to be wrong, on the part of the doer, which is indispensable to our anger against him, being a rightful emotion; and it is neither the acting nor the thinking erroneously, on the part of man, which in itself brings down upon them the wrath of God. It is their doing so intelligently. It is their stifling the remonstrances of truth in the work of unrighteousness. It is that they voluntarily bid it into silence; and, bent on the iniquity that they love, do, in the wilful prosecution of it, drown its inward voice—just as they would deafen the friendly warning of any monitor who is standing beside them; and whose advice they guess would be on the side of what is right, and against the side of their own inclinations. Were there no light present to their minds, there would be no culpability. On the other hand, should it shine clearly upon them, this makes them responsible for every act of disobedience

to its lessons. But more, should it shine but dimly, and it be a dimness of their own bringing on—should they land in a state of darkness, and that not because any outward luminary has been extinguished; but because, in hatred of its beams and loving the darkness, they have shut their eyes—or should it be a candle within which has waned and withered to the very border of extinction, under their own desirous endeavours to mar the brilliancy of its flame—should there be a law of our nature, in virtue of which every deed of opposition to the conscience causes it to speak more faintly than before, and to shine more feebly than before, and should this be the law which has conducted every human being on the face of our earth to the uttermost depths, both of moral blindness and moral apathy—Still he is what he is because he willed against the light, and wrought against the light. It is this which brings a direct criminality upon his person. It is this which constitutes a clear principle for his condemnation to rest upon; and it is enough to fasten blame-worthiness upon his doings, that they were either done in despite of the convictions which he had, or done in despite of the convictions which but for his own wilful depravity he might have had.

The Bible, in charging any individual with actual sin, always presupposes a knowledge, either presently possessed or unworthily lost or still attainable on his part, of some rightful authority, against which he hath done some act of wilful defiance. The contact of light with the mind of the transgressor, and that too in such sufficiency as, if he had followed

it, would have guided him to an action different from the one he has performed, is essential to the sinfulness of that action—insomuch that on the day of reckoning, when the men of all nations and all ages shall stand around the judgment-seat, there is not one who will be pronounced an outcast of condemnation there, who will not feel an echo in his own conscience to the righteousness of the sentence under which he has fallen; and who, though living in the midst of thickest heathenism, will not remember the visitations of a light which he ought to have followed, and by resisting which he has personally deserved the displeasure of God that shall then be over him, the doom of the eternity that shall then be before him.

In the 19th and following verses, the apostle, aware that to establish the guilt of the world's unrighteousness it was necessary to prove that it was unrighteousness committed in the face of knowledge, affirms what it was that man knew originally, and how it was that the light which was at one time in them became darkness. That which it was competent to know about God, was manifest among men. God himself had showed it unto men. He had either done so by the wisdom that shone in creation, making it plain to man's natural discernment that it was the product of a supreme and eternal intelligence; and this is one way in which we may understand how the invisible properties of the Godhead are clearly seen, even from the impress of them, stamped and evident to the reflecting eye, on the face of creation itself. Or He had expressly revealed the fact to man that the

world was created, and that He was the Author of it. Instead of leaving them to find this out, He had made it known to them by actual communication. It is not necessary to conceive from these verses, that the doctrines of the existence and perfections of God are the achievements of man's unaided discovery at the first. In that age of extraordinary manifestations, when God put forth the arm of a Creator, He may also have put forth the voice of a Revealer; and simply announced to men that the world they lived in was a workmanship, and that He Himself was the builder and the maker of it. With the simple information that the world made not itself, but had a beginning, they could rise to the perception of Him who had no beginning. They could infer the eternity of that Being who Himself was uncreated. They could infer the magnitude of His power, seeing it to be commensurate to the production of that stupendous mechanism which lay visibly around them. They could infer His Godhead, or in other words His supremacy—the subordination of all that existed to His purpose and will—His right of property in this universe, and in all those manifold riches which fill and which adorn it—and more particularly that He originated all their faculties; that He provided them with all their enjoyments; that every secondary source and agent of gratification to them, was a mere channel of conveyance for His liberality; that, behind all which was visible, there were a power and a Godhead invisible which had been from eternity, and were now put forth in bright and beautiful development on a created

expanse, where every thing was that could regale the senses, and be exuberant of delight and blessedness to the living creatures by whom it was occupied.

It is not necessary to enter into a contest about the powers or the limits of the human faculties—though we shall afterwards attempt to make it evident, that, debased and darkened as we are by sin, there is enough of light in the human conscience to render inexcusable human ungodliness. But let us at present confine ourselves to the circumstances adverted to by the apostle, according to the historical truth of them. He is evidently describing the historical progress of human degeneracy; and begins with the state of matters at the commencement of a darkening and deteriorating process, which took place on the character of man. And, without resolving the metaphysical question How far man without a direct communication from Heaven could have found his way to the being and attributes of the Divinity, let us just take up with the commencement of matters as it actually stood. It was a period of extraordinary manifestations; and God made Himself directly and personally known, as the one Creator of all things; and men had only to look with the eye of their senses to these things, and to conclude how much of power, how much of wisdom, how much of rightful sovereignty and ownership, belonged to Him that framed all and upholds all. We may not be sure, in how far man could, on the strength of his own unborrowed resources, have steered his ascending way to the knowledge of a God. But the communicated

fact that God did exist, and that He was the framer and the architect of all, put him on high vantage ground—from which might be clearly seen the eternal power of the Supreme, and His eternal Godhead.

We have only time to advert, shortly, to the way in which the truth respecting God was changed into a lie. The creature became more loved and more depended on, than the Creator. He was not glorified as the Giver, and the Maker of all created good. But what was sensibly and immediately good, was sought after for itself, was valued on its own account, was enjoyed without any thankful reference to Him who granted all and originated all; and this too in the face of a distinct knowledge, that every thing was held of God—in the face of an authoritative voice, claiming what was due to God —in the face of a conscience powerful at the outset of man's history, however much it may have been darkened and overborne in the subsequent process of his alienation. And thus the tenure of his earthly enjoyments was gradually lost sight of altogether; and the urgencies of sense and of the world got the better of all impressions of the Deity; and man at length felt his portion and his security and his all to be, not in the Author of creation, but in the creation itself with all its gay and goodly and fascinating varieties. His mind lost its hold of a great and subordinating principle, by which he could have assigned its right place, and viewed according to its just relationship, all that was around him. The world in fact, by a mighty deed of usurpation, dethroned the Deity from the ascendancy

which belonged to Him; and thus the rule of estimation was subverted within him, and his foolish heart was darkened. This disorder in the state of his affections, while it clouded and subverted his discerning faculties, did not at the same time restrain the exercise of them. The first ages of the world, as is evident from the history of Babel, were ages of ambitious speculation; and man, with his love strongly devoted to the things of sense, still dreamed and imagined and theorized about hidden principles; and, with his sense of the one presiding Divinity nearly as good as obliterated, he began to fancy a distinct agency in each distinct element and department of nature; and, to make use of the strong phrases of God giving them up and giving them over, we may infer a law of connection between a distempered state of the heart, and a distempered state of the understanding; and thus their very wisdom was turned into folly; and to their perverted eye, the world was turned into one vast theatre of idolatry; and they personified all that they loved and all that they feared—till by the affections and the judgment acting and reacting, the one upon the other, they sank down into the degrading fooleries of Paganism.

LECTURE V.

ROMANS, i, 28.

"And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient."

Before proceeding to enforce the lesson that may be educed from this text, let us shortly remark, that the not liking to retain God in our knowledge, might have been rendered by the not trying to do so, not exercising our minds on the proof and information that were before them—so as to fix the right belief about God, and to perpetuate the right view and perception of Him. At the same time it is very true that not to try the evidence, and not to prosecute the guidance of the light which we have about any doctrine, argues either a dislike to that doctrine, or an indifference about it—so that any slight amendment which may be made of the English translation upon this score does not affect the truth which it here sets before us, that God gives over to a reprobate mind, those who do not like to retain Him in their knowledge.

But the term 'reprobate' too, admits of some little remark in the way of explanation. In its prevailing acceptation, it suggests to our minds a hopeless and abandoned wickedness of character; and so is expressive of a diseased state of the moral principles. In its primary sense it was equivalent to the term undiscerning, or undistinguishing;

and so is expressive of a darkened state of the understanding. In your larger Bibles, you will find a reprobate mind rendered on the margin into a mind void of judgment. But still it is judgment, not exercised on any secular or philosophical question, but the judgment of what is moral and spiritual—that kind of judgment where error leads necessarily and immediately to practical unrighteousness; and where therefore the love of the unrighteousness disposes us to prefer the darkness rather than the light. It is thus that the understanding and the affections act and react upon each other; and that we read of men of corrupt minds having no judgment, or being reprobate concerning the faith; and of those who are abominable and disobedient, being also void of judgment about every good work, or unto every good work being reprobate.

In the sad narrative of the apostle in this chapter, he appears to refer not to the history of one individual mind, or of one individual conscience—the defilement of which two provinces in our moral and intellectual nature, goes on contemporaneously, with every human being who is in a state of progressive corruption. But he rather sketches out to us in this chapter the progress of the world's degeneracy from one age to another; and we would infer from his account that men, in the first instance, had a far more clear and convinced sense of God; but, not liking to retain it, committed the sin of a perverse disposition against the light which they had, and in part extinguished it—that they of course left their own immediate posterity, in a

light more shaded and reduced than that which shone around the outset of their own progress through the world—that these still disliked the remainder of truth which they enjoyed; and, by their wilful resistance to its lessons inflicted upon it a further mutilation, and transmitted it to their descendants with a still deeper hue of obscurity thrown over it—that thus, by every successive step from one generation to another, the light of divine truth went down in this world's history more tarnished and impaired than ever; but still with such glimpses as, however feeble and however faded, were enough at least to try the affection of man towards it, were enough to stir up a distinct resistance on the part of those who disliked it, were enough to keep up the responsibility of the world, and to retain it in rightful dependence on the judgment of Him who made the world—so as to make it clear on the day of reckoning, that men, even in their state of most sunken alienation from the true God, were never, like the beasts that perish, so helplessly blind, and so destitute of all capacity for discerning between the good and the evil, as to render them the unfit subjects of a moral sentence and a moral examination. With every human creature who shall be pronounced worthy of death on that day, will it be seen that there was either a light which he actually had and liked not to retain, or a light which he might have had and liked not to recover. To whom much is given of him much shall be required; and there will be gradations of punishment in hell; and in that place where the retributions of vengeance are adminis-

tered, will there be the infliction of many stripes upon some, and of few stripes upon others; and it will be more tolerable for those who lived in a darkness that was not wilfully of their own bringing on, than for those who stood on the ground of rebellion amid the full blaze and effulgency of light from Heaven. Yet still, there shall not be one unhappy outcast in that abode of eternal condemnation, who will not be convicted of sin knowing it to be so; who, whatever be the age or country of the world which he occupied, has not been plied with admonitions which he resisted, and urged by such an authoritative sense of duty as he trampled upon—and that too, in the spirit of a daring and presumptuous defiance. In short, be his ignorance what it may, there was a wilful depravity which went beyond the limits of his ignorance—Be that region of human affairs over which he roamed in utter darkness as extended as it may, still there was a region of light upon which he made his intrusions with the intelligent purpose, and in the determined spirit of a rebel—Let the moral geography of the place he occupied be as remote as it may, still there was a Law the voice of which at times did reach him, and the sanctions of which must when time is no more at length overtake him —Let the darkening of his foolish heart be as due as it may to the sin of his ancestors, they still left a tribunal there from which went forth upon him the whisper of many an intimation—In the darkest period of this world's abandonment, were there still the vestiges of truth before every eye, and a conscience awake in every bosom,—insomuch

that not one trembling culprit will be seen before the judgment-seat, who will not stand self-convicted under the voice of a challenging and inspecting Deity—His own heart will bear witness to the sentence that has gone forth against him; and the echoing voice of his own memory, will be to him the knell of his righteous and everlasting condemnation.

But we should like to bring the principle of our text more distinctly and individually to bear upon you. That process in general history by which the decline of this world's light respecting God, and the decline of its practical allegiance to His authority, have kept pace, the one with the other, is often realized in the personal history of a single individual. There is a connection by the law of our nature, between his wilful disobedience and his spiritual darkness. You have read perhaps in our old theologians, of what they called a judicial blindness. It is a visitation consequent upon sin. It is a withdrawment of the Spirit of God, when grieved and discouraged and provoked by our resistance to His warnings. It is that Spirit ceasing to strive with the children of men; and coming to this as the final result of the contest He has so long maintained with their obstinacy—He shall let them alone since they will have it so. It is an extinction of the light which they once had, but refused to be led by; and now perhaps that they have it not, may they do many an evil thing to the evil of which they are profoundly asleep, and against which their conscience, now lulled and stifled into spiritual death, lifts no voice of remon-

strance whatever. The guilt of sins committed in this state of dormancy, which is of their own bringing on, is no more done away by their insensibility to the foulness of them, than is the guilt of murder committed in the fury of wilful intoxication. And ye depraved and hackneyed old, at the doors of whose hearts we have so often knocked and knocked in vain, we bid you remember a season of alarm and tenderness which has now passed away—we ask of you to look back on the prayers and the precautions of boyhood, when, the conscience awake and at her post, you at one time trembled to think of that which you can now do without remorse and without fearfulness. Ye men who have become stout-hearted sinners, and just because the moral light which shone upon you once has been extinguished by yourselves, and by yourselves your foolish hearts have been darkened—the scruples and the sensibilities of your earlier days may all have taken their departure, and such may be the lethargy of your souls that neither the thunders of the law nor the entreaties of the gospel can move them. You may now be able to stand your ground against all the spiritual artillery of the pulpit—and, even though death has stalked at large over the entire field of your former companionship and left you a solitary and surviving memorial of friends and of families that have all been swept away, still may you persist in the spirit of an unbroken worldliness, and act the secure and the stout-hearted sinner, who rivets all his desires and all his hopes on a slippery foundation. It is true indeed, that, with a conscience obliterated, and an

inner man deaf to every awakening call, and a system of moral feelings like a piece of worn and rusty mechanism that cannot be set agoing, and an overhanging torpor upon all the spiritual faculties, so that every denunciation of an angry God and a coming vengeance is only heard like a sound that whistles by—it is indeed true that he whose soul is in a condition such as this, sits in the region and in the shadow of grossest darkness. But it is not like the transmitted darkness of Paganism, which he can offer to plead in mitigation—or which will make his last sentence more tolerable for him even as it shall be more tolerable for Sodom or Gomorrah. It is a darkness which he loved, and into which he voluntarily entered. He made his escape to it from the light which he hated; and by his own act did he so outrun his pursuing conscience, as now to be at a distance from her warnings. If the call of 'repent or perish' do not bring him back—it is because he is sealed unto the day of condemnation; it is because God hath given him over to a reprobate mind; it is because he is judicially in a state of blindness; it is because his soul is compassed with a thick and heavy atmosphere of his own gathering. The Heathen sinner will be tried by the light which he had. The Christian sinner will be tried by the light which he fled from. This is his condemnation, that light has come into his part of the world—and he would not come to meet and be enlightened by it. He is on a footing altogether different from that of the idolater—though the darkness in which he is enveloped be irrecoverable. Enough that a light was offered

which he refused—or enough that a light was once possessed, and he did not like to retain it.

We have already remarked, that, in the gradual darkening and deterioration of our world from one age to another, each age became successively more ignorant of God than the preceding; and yet with each we believe, even in the veriest wilds of savage and unwrought humanity, is there enough of light and enough of conscience, and enough of God's law in dim but remaining vestiges, to make every individual of our species a fit subject for moral examination, and for a righteous sentence consequent upon a fair and impartial trial. Now we have not practically to do with the destinies of the unconverted Heathen—nor shall we just now enter upon this region of speculation at all. But we have immediately to do with a question which respects the immortality of our own countrymen. What is their light, and what is the degree of their condemnation if they resist it? What is the precise addition which our possession of the Bible has conferred upon our responsibility? What is the knowledge of God to which a conscientious and diligent perusal of this book might conduct us—unless we like not to receive that knowledge which we might obtain? What is the knowledge of God which we throw away from us by throwing this book away from us —and that because we like not to retain the knowledge which we might possess? Only grant, that we are as morally and as rightfully to blame for not acquiring the light which we might receive if we had so willed it, as for not preserving the light which we might attain if we had so willed it; and

the question before us is brought within a manageable compass. Is there at the very outset enough of likelihood that God might be the author of this book, as should resolve us upon a serious examination—then if God actually be the author, we have not acquired the knowledge of Him we might have done; and we shall be condemned accordingly, if we withhold the examination which ought to have been given. Is there enough of the character of the Divinity stamped upon its pages, that, had we only read with earnestness and pondered with earnestness, we would have beheld the traces of Him distinctly there and have been satisfied—then if, instead of so reading, we have wantonly and ignorantly reviled it, God may righteously step forth, and vindicate upon our persons, the truth of His insulted message and the honesty of His insulted messengers. If the suspicion has ever come into any of your hearts, that this ridicule of Scripture may after all be a ridicule of the Almighty; and you, instead of being arrested by the impulse of such a visitation, have, in the mad outcry of a great and growing infatuation, made your strenuous effort to keep down this compunctious feeling, and have prevailed—then have you committed yourselves, and that wilfully, to the hazards of this alternative—that either the Scripture is a fable, or you by the choice of your own hearts and the deed of your own hands have come under all the curses that are written in it. Certain it is, that, to whatever term of whatever alternative the world may commit itself in reference to Christianity, Christianity commits itself to a very distinct alternative

in reference to the world—and if this religion indeed be true; and such be the actual influence of the human will upon the human understanding, that he who is willing to do God's will shall know of the doctrine of Christ that it is from God; and if faith in the gospel be at all times the fruit of moral honesty, duly exercised and sincerely in quest of what is right; and if the spirit of direction be given to him who has an upright feeling of desire to do as he ought, and to believe as he ought; and if every man who faithfully follows the light of his conscience, is thereby conducted to a reverence for his Bible and a reliance upon his Bible; and if infidelity be at all times the issuing product of a heart careless about God, and utterly unconcerned either to retain such knowledge of Him as it has, or to acquire such knowledge of Him as it has not—then, it may not be in the power of a fellow-man, under all those guises of candour and frankness and liberality which the unbeliever can put on, so to feel his way through the intricacies of another's spirit, as to catch the lurking criminality and bring it out in satisfying exposure to the general eye. But let Christianity be true, and mark the fearful alternative to him who spurns it away. The unseen author of it ponders every heart; and, mysterious as its workings are to us, there is nothing in them all that can baffle the scrutiny of Him who formed it; and if there be, as the Bible says there is, an alliance between infidelity and moral evil, He can detect it, and bring it out on the day of reckoning to open manifestation—He can unveil the whole process of this miserable delusion; and at any step of

it where pride or ungodliness or selfishness or profligacy did operate its bias upon the understanding, He can make it good, and that to the conviction of the unhappy man, that his judgment was in error just because his affections were in error—that there was a want of belief in his mind, just because there was a want of worth in his character—that he was not a Christian man, just because he was not an upright man—and that the light which was in him was turned into darkness, just because he did not care to retain it; and after it was lost he did not care and did not choose to recover it.

To satisfy you of a real connection between the state of man's moral principles on the one hand, and the state of his intellectual principles on the other, let us have recourse to one simple illustration. For it does require to be explained. There is many an error in judgment which implies no worldliness of character whatever. A man may have a wrong opinion in matters of trade or philosophy or law; and this altogether unconnected with any wrong habit of the life, or any wrong and depraved habit of the affections. And might not he, in like manner, have a wrong opinion on a question of theology, and be so very far in the wrong as to think Christianity a fable, and all this without any moral perversity being the cause of his error? Might it not be a mere mistake of the understanding for which he lies under no responsibility at all, at that bar where nothing is condemned that is not criminal? Where lies the greater fault of an error in a matter of speculation, and that because a man has a bad understanding, than of an error

in a matter of sight, and that because a man has bad eyes? How is it that there is any connection between sentiment and sin? And let our belief be as mistaken as it may—explain to us how it comes to be an affair of moral turpitude, and with what justice or upon what principles it can have the retribution of any moral vengeance awarded to it?

If any of you, the victim of helpless poverty, were suddenly translated into ease and affluence—and that through a ministration of liberality left at your door by the hand of some unknown benefactor—in reference to him, though utterly in the dark about his person, you may be guilty of the crime of ingratitude. To make no enquiry about him were ungrateful. To riot in the enjoyment of the gift, without one thought of concern or curiosity about the giver, were both selfish and ungrateful. To be better pleased that you did not know and have no repayment of gratitude to make, is the very essence of ingratitude; and that too in reference to an individual whose person perhaps you never saw, and whose name perhaps you never heard. To sit at greater ease without the burden of obligation upon you to any known benefactor, than you would do if he stood revealed to your apprehension, and claimed the due return of affection or of service—this is decisive of a heart tainted with the sin of ingratitude. It is sin which keeps you from enquiring; and if carefully to enquire were certainly to find, it is sin which keeps you from discovering. You want the light, and just because you hate it. You have not the know-

ledge of the heart that pitied and the hand that aided you, because it is a knowledge you like not to acquire.

And thus it is, that many is the man who is ignorant of God—and yet lies under the full guilt and burden of ungodliness. Many is the man who with the world as his satisfying portion, never lifts one anxious enquiry after Him who made the world; and think you that his defective theology is as free of blame or condemnation, as is the defective philosophy of him who never attempted the toils of scholarship? Tell, if here a want of understanding may not resolve itself into a want of principle. He does not know God. But he does not seek to know Him. His mistakes of conception regarding the Deity, or his total want of conception about Him, may be designed as mere errors of judgment, or as a mere blindness of the judgment. But it is the error and the blindness of one who wishes not to see. He grovels in ignorance; but it may be just because he grovels in corruption. He is so engrossed with the creature, that he would like to be quit of a Creator. There may be an utter absence of light, and yet may he realise all the guilt of impiety. He may stand on the verge of atheism, or even be darkling within its limits—and yet his worthlessness have the very same element with the worthlessness of him, before the eye of whose conviction God stands fully manifested, and who places himself in known defiance to his understood and authoritative voice.

But let us recur again to our illustration. The unknown friend may wish to reveal himself to the

man he has befriended. He may send a messenger with a letter to his door. He may inscribe such evidences of his authenticity there, as would force conviction if the letter was but read. He may specify the amount, and he may specify the particulars of the ministration which had been rendered; and that in such a way as to prove that he was the author of it. The bearer of the communication may have all the marks of honesty about him—yet this be not enough. He may tell a consistent story—yet this be not enough. There may be companions along with him of complexion as fair and creditable as his own to vouch for the accuracy of his statement—yet this be not enough. The last and most conclusive evidence may still be in reserve—It may lie in the substance of the written communication—and not till he to whom it is addressed has opened it and read it, may he come fully to recognise and verify his benefactor.

And yet to a soul of selfishness and ingratitude, this might be an unwelcome intrusion. He may have no desire to know his benefactor; and have a dread or a dislike towards the revelation of his will; and he may spurn the messenger from his door; and he may refuse to open or to read the letter that has been offered to him; and the best evidence that there was upon the question may never have been before his eyes—not because it did not exist, but because he refused to look at it—Nay he might have read, but read in such a careless and hasty style of perusal, that he did not attain to conviction, and just because he took no pains to be convinced. And who does not see that his want of

right understanding resolves into a want of right principle—that there is a taint of moral perversity in the whole of this proceeding—that the sin of his judgment is the sin of his heart—and that unbelief which many would screen from condemnation, is in his instance unbelief fostered by his own wilful depravity, and an unbelief for which he deserves to be execrated?

And so may it be of Christianity. God may have sent a written communication to the world. And to every careful, and desirous reader, the evidence of His hand may be legibly inscribed upon it; and he who is willing to do His will, may recognize in the doctrine of Christ the traces of the divinity which inspired it; and the man on whose heart a weight of conscientiousness lies, may by the dint of patience and of prayer come to a full and rational assurance of its truth; and just because reading and enquiring and attending the ordinances, and all under the impulse of a sense of duty, may he become a stedfast believer. But if careless about God, he will be equally careless about any revelation that professes to have come from Him. The Bible may often solicit his eye, but still remain unopened and unused by him. That book from whose pages, if explored with honesty and prayer, there might beam a celestial effulgency upon his understanding, may be held in neglect or treated with insult and derision. For aught he knows, it may be the record of the will of Him who ushered him into life, and ministers to him all its enjoyments. And if ever the thought of this possibility visited his heart, and he in the face of it joined in

the infidel cry of those who deride and who disown it—then on another day may the remembrance of this visitation rise in judgment against him; and it be made clear to his own conscience, that, in spurning the Bible from his door he braved the hazards of a contest with Omnipotence.

LECTURE VI.

ROMANS, ii, 1—12.

Therefore thou art inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou art that judgest: for wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself; for thou that judgest doest the same things. But we are sure that the judgment of God is according to truth against them which commit such things. And thinkest thou this, O man, that judgest them which do such things and doest the same, that thou shalt escape the judgment of God? or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and long-suffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance? but after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God; who will render to every man according to his deeds: to them who by patient continuance in well-doing, seek for glory and honour and immortality, eternal life; but unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath: tribulation and anguish upon every soul of man that doeth evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile; but glory, honour, and peace, to every man that worketh good, to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile. For there is no respect of persons with God. For as many as have sinned without law shall also perish without law; and as many as have sinned in the law shall be judged by the law."

Before proceeding to the exposition of this chapter, it may be remarked of the concluding verse in the last chapter, that, with all the blindness which the apostle charges on the heathens, and with all the dislike of retaining God in their knowledge which he ascribes to them—there was still one particular of this knowledge which they did retain. They still knew as much of God's judgment, as to be conscious that what they were doing, in the sinfulness

and reprobacy of their minds, was worthy of death. There was still a remainder of conscience about them, in virtue of which they felt that there were a sin and a condemnation which attached to their own persons. With all the obliteration which had come upon their moral faculties—there were still the traces of a law which they could obscurely read, and of a voice which faintly uttered itself in notes of disapprobation. They were conscious that all was not right about them; and had the impression of a Being greater than themselves, to whose account they were responsible; and the idea of a reckoning and of a sentence were not altogether strange to their understandings. For still, in the most sunken ages of our decaying and deteriorating species, did each man carry about with him such a light as, if he did not follow it, would render him a sinner—not against such principles as were altogether hidden, but against such principles as were partly known to him. And such vestiges of a natural sense about the right and the wrong, may not only be gathered from the books of Pagan antiquity; but they may be still more satisfactorily educed, from the converse that we hold in the present day with the living Paganism which still abounds in our world. We know not a more deeply interesting walk of observation, than that which is prosecuted by modern missionaries, when they come into contact and communication with the men of a still unbroken country—when they make their lodgment on one of the remote and yet untravelled wilds of Paganism—when, after the interval of four thousand years from the dispersion of the great

family of mankind, they go to one of its most widely diverging branches, and ascertain what of conscience or what of religious light has among them survived the lapse of so many generations —when they thus, as it were, knock at the door of nature left for ages to itself, and try if there yet be slumbering any sense or intelligence there which can at all respond to the message they have brought along with them. Nor do we know an evolution of the human heart which carries in it more of a big and an affecting interest, than that on which philosophy has never cast an enquiring regard—even that among its dark and long unentered recesses, there still subsists an undying voice, which owns the comfort and echoes back the truth of Christianity. Insomuch that, let missionaries go to the very extremity of our species, and speak of sin and judgment and condemnation, they do not speak in vocables unknown; and sweet to many a soul is the preacher's voice, when he tells that unto them a Saviour is born; and out of the relics of even this deep and settled degeneracy, can be gotten the materials of a satisfying demonstration; and thus in the very darkest places have converts multiplied, and Christian villages arisen, and the gospel been the savour of life unto life to the some who have embraced it, and been the savour of death unto death to the many who have declined it— all proving that a principle still existed in their bosoms, which if they followed would guide them to salvation, and which if they fled from would try them and find them to be guilty. Nor let us wonder therefore, that the apostle, even when speaking of those

who are given over to every abomination, should still affirm of them that they know the judgments of God. Even a remainder of that knowledge which they liked not to retain, still kept its hold upon their conscience and gave them a responsibility which belongs not to the beasts that perish. Man, in short, throughout the whole of this world's peopled territory, has a law by which he may righteously be judged; and still enough of it is known and felt by his own conscience to make it out, that for its violation he should be righteously condemned. So that, dark as our conceptions may be of the present character and future fate of those who live under the shadow of heathenism, we may be sure that a clear and righteous principle of retribution will be applied to them all; and that they who shall be judged worthy of death on that day will be found to have committed such things, as they themselves either knew or might have known to be worthy of it.

There is still another phrase in the verse which may require to be adverted to. It is there said of the people who committed things worthy of death, that they not only did the same, but had pleasure in them that did them. This last marks a higher and a more formed depravity, than the direct commission of that which is evil. To be hurried along by the violence of passion into some deed of licentiousness, may consist with the state of a mind that feels its own degradation, and mourns over the infirmity of its purposes. But to look with connivance and delight on the sin of others—to have pleasure in their companionship—and to spirit

them on in the ways of disobedience, after perhaps the urgency which prompted his own career of it has abated—this argues, not the subjection of one faculty to another, but the subjection of the whole man to sin, viewed as an object of full and formal approbation. This is a reprobacy of the mind, to which the old are sometimes given over, after they have run their course of dissipation. At the outset, even of this lawless history, was there a struggling principle within them, which debated, and, for a time, parried off the question of indulgence; and after they entered on the transgressor's path, did they taste the bitterness of many a compunctious visitation. But under that hardening process, which we have already explained, the conscience at length lost its tenderness, and all its pangs and all its remonstrances were forgotten; and, from one year to another, can the voluptuary, more abandoned than before, lift a louder and a louder defiance to the authority which at one time overawed him. But never, perhaps, does he betray such a fatal symptom of one who is indeed given over, as when age, with all its ailing helplessness, has at length overtaken him; and he can now only smile at the remembrance of joys which he can no longer realize; and the young who assemble at his festive board, are by him cheered forward on that way of destruction, to the end of which he is so fast hastening; and the poison of his own indelicacy spreads its vitiating influence over the unpractised guests who are around him. Depravity so unfeeling as this, which goes to augment its own votaries and its own victims, and

67963

to perpetuate a legacy in hell from one rebellious generation to another, was daily and currently exemplified in the manners of an age which has now passed by. And if, in the progress of an external or fashionable reformation, it now be nearly unknown, let the record of it at least serve to mark, how even an individual conscience can wither in its possessor's bosom to the very margin of extinction; and how ere he leaves the world he can bequeath to it an increase of degeneracy, adding his own seductive testimony to all the other engines of corruption which are already at work in it—thus serving to explain, not merely how guilt is ever growing in power and ascendancy over the habits of a single man, but how it deepens and accumulates and rises into magnitude more appalling, along the line of the advancing history of our species.

Before entering upon the exposition of the verses which have now been read in your hearing, let it be remarked, that the special design of the writer of this epistle begins to open into clearer manifestation. The fact is, that it was written to the believers in Rome, before he ever had made a personal appearance in that city. We know from the book of Acts, that, upon his arrival there, it was his first care to obtain an interview with the people of his own nation; and that, as his practice was in other places, he began his explanation of the gospel in the hearing of the Jews, and then turned himself also unto the Gentiles. Certain it is, that in this written communication, the main purport of the argument, is to conciliate the Jews to the

faith of the gospel. It is to make them understand, that, in respect of their need of salvation, they were on a footing just as helpless as that of the Gentiles; that a like sentence of wrath had gone out against both; and a like process of recovery was indispensable to both. For the accomplishment of this object, he makes, we apprehend, a very skilful approach to the Jewish understanding. Throughout the whole of his writings, in fact, do we see that he abounded in wise but honourable devices, for the purpose of giving weight and acceptance to his reasonings. He was all things to all men, not to the extent of surrendering any particle of truth to their prejudices, but to the extent of doing all that might be fairly or innocently done, for the purpose of softening and surprising them out of their prejudices. The picture which he draws in the first chapter, is a picture of the Gentile world; and its most conspicuous lineaments are those of Gentile profligacy; and in laying it before the eye of a Jewish observer, he in fact deals with him even as Nathan did with David, when he offered him a disguised representation of his own character, and turned the indignation which he had previously kindled in the bosom of the monarch upon his own head. For you will observe, that though the most prominent features of the apostolic sketch, are drawn from the abominations and the excesses of Heathenism, there are others which are descriptive, not of any special, but of that universal corruption, which may be read and recognised on the person of every member of the human family. The common depravities of

our race are made to enter into the enumeration, along with those which are more monstrous and unnatural; and the vices which are chargeable upon all, are mixed up in the same catalogue with the vices which are chargeable upon some; and the Jew, heedless of those traits of the description which may be fastened on himself, is thus caught, as it were, into an indignation which may be retorted back again upon his own character. It is thus that the apostle begins this second chapter, much in the way in which the prophet of the Old Testament prosecuted the advantage that he had won over David, whose resentment he had kindled against an act of oppression, which he himself had both imitated and outdone. "Thou art the man," is reiterated upon the Jew, throughout the whole of the second and the greater part of the third chapter—it being the main object of our apostle to assail the opposition in that quarter where it looked to be most impregnable—to extend the conviction of sin from the Gentile whom he had laid prostrate before him, to the Jew who still kept a boastful attitude, on the ground of that self-sufficiency which the apostle labours to cut away—to prove, in short, that all were under sin, and all were in need of a Saviour; that all were partakers of the same guilt, and must be partakers of the same grace, ere they could be restored to acceptance with that God whom in common they had all offended.

In order that you feel the force of the apostle's demonstration, there is one principle which is held to be sound in human law, and which in all equity

ought to be extended to the law of God. The principle is this—that, however manifold the enactments of the law may be, it is possible, by one act or one kind of disobedience, to incur the guilt of an entire defiance to the authority which framed it; and therefore to bring rightfully down upon the head of the transgressor, the whole weight of the severities which it denounces against the children of iniquity. To be worthy of death, it is not necessary to commit all the things which are included in the sad enumeration of human vices—any more than it is necessary for a criminal, to add depredation to forgery, or murder to both, ere a capital sentence go out against him, from the administrators of the law upon which he has trampled. You may as effectually cut with a friend by one hostile or insolent expression, as if you had employed a thousand; and your disownal of an authority may be as intelligibly announced, by one deed of defiance as by many; and your contempt of Heaven's court be as strongly manifested, by your wilful violation of one of the commandments, as if you had thwarted every requirement of its prescribed and published ceremonial. It is true that there are gradations of punishment; but these are measured, not according to the multiplicity of outward offences, but according to the intensity of the rebellious principle that is within. In virtue of an honourable feeling, you may never steal; and this is the deduction of one external iniquity from the history of the doings of the outer man. But it is not on that account an alleviation of the ungodliness of the inner man. You may have natural affection,

and never abandon either a child to the exposure of its infancy, or a parent to the helplessness of his age; and yet your heart be as destitute as that of any of the inferior animals, of affection for your Father who is in heaven. The man who has thrown off the allegiance of loyalty, may feel no inclination to walk the whole round of disobedience to the laws; and yet upon the temptation of one single opportunity, and by the breaking forth of one single expression, may he bring down the whole vengeance of Government upon his person. The man who has thrown off the allegiance of Religion, may neither have the occasion nor the wish to commit all the offences which it prohibits, or to utter all the blasphemies which may be vented forth in the spirit of defiance against the Almighty's throne. And yet the principle of defiance may have taken full possession of his heart; and irreligion may be the element in which he breathes. And in every instance, when his will comes into competition with the will of God, may the creature lift himself above the Creator; and though, according to the varieties of natural temperament these instances may be more manifold and various with one man than with another—yet that which essentially constitutes the character of moral and spiritual guilt may be of equal strength and inveteracy with both —Making it as true of a reputable member of society in our day, as it was of the formal and observant Pharisee, that he only conformed to the law of God, when, though walking all the while in the counsel of his own heart; conformity is that which he would; and always trampled upon this

law, whenever, walking in the same counsel, conformity is a thing which he would not. Ungodliness, in short, is not a thing of tale and measure. It is a thing of weight and of quality. It may be as thoroughly infused through the character of him who is observant of all the civilized decencies of life, as of him whose enormities have rendered him an outcast from all the common regards of society. Heaven's sanctuary is alike scorned and alike neglected by both; and on the head of each, will there be the same descending burden of Heaven's righteous indignation.

Among the varieties both of taste and of habit which obtain with the different individuals of our species, there are modifications of disobedience agreeable to one class and disgustful to another class. The careful and calculating economist may never join in any of the excesses of dissipation; and the man of regardless expenditure may never send an unrelieved petitioner from his door; and the religious formalist may never omit either sermon or sacrament, that is held throughout the year in the place of his attendance; and the honourable merchant may never flinch or falsify, in any one of the transactions of business. Each has such points of conformity as suits him, and each has such other points of non-conformity as suits him; and thus the one may despise or even execrate the other, for that particular style of disobedience by which he indulges his own partialities; and the things which they respectively do, differ there can be no doubt as to the matter of them—but as to the mind of unconcern about God which

all of them express, they are virtually and essentially the same. So that amid the censure and contempt which so currently pass between men of various classes and characters in society, there is one pervading quality of ungodliness which they hold in common; and in virtue of which the condemnation that one pronounces upon another, may righteously be turned upon himself; and it be said of him in the language of the apostle, 'therefore thou art inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou art that judgest; for wherein thou judgest another thou condemnest thyself; for thou that judgest doest the same things.'

Romans, ii, 1–12. This passage requires almost nothing in the way of verbal criticism. The term for 'despise' in the 4th verse needed not to have been so rendered as to denote an active contempt —but rather a mere disregard and negligence of the opportunity, which God in His forbearance had afforded to sinners, for returning and making their peace with Him. The term 'patient' again, in the 7th verse, signifies, both here and in other places of Scripture, something more active than the mere virtue of patience under suffering. They who bring forth fruits with patience, are they who do so with perseverance. They who run their race with patience, are they who persevere in so running. They who maintain a patient continuance, are they who maintain a persevering continuance in well-doing.

The whole passage is so plain, that it scarcely admits of elucidation even from a paraphrase. But let the following be offered to you.

'Therefore, O man, thou art without excuse, whosoever thou art, that judgest; for, in judging another, thou condemnest thyself—seeing that thou who judgest doest the same things. And we are sure, that God's judgment is according to truth, against them who commit these things. And dost thou think, O man, who judgest them that do such things, and doest the same, that thou shalt escape God's judgment? Or do you despise His goodness and forbearance and long-suffering, inadvertent of this, that it is His goodness which affords to you a season of repentance? But, instead of this, do you, after your hard and impenitent heart, treasure up to yourselves wrath against the day of wrath, and against the day when the righteousness of God's judgments shall be rendered manifest? God will render to every man according to his deeds—to them who by a course of perseverance in well-doing seek for glory, honour, and immortality, eternal life; but unto them who of contention and obstinacy do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, will be rendered indignation and wrath: tribulation and anguish, upon every son of man that doeth evil, of the Jew first and also of the Gentile; but glory, honour, and peace, to every man that worketh good; to the Jew first and also to the Gentile: for there is no respect of persons with God on that day, whatever apparent preference He may make of one man over another, and of one people over another in the present stage of His administrations. He will then judge every man according to the light that was in his mind, according to the law which spake its authority to his

conscience, and which he himself recognizes to be of rightful obligation.'

It may be remarked that 'tribulation' simply denotes affliction, and is the same here in the original, as in the passage, 'we are *troubled* on every side'—and that 'anguish' signifies the affliction from which there is no hope of our being extricated; and is the same in the original, as in the passage, that 'though troubled on every side we are not *distressed*.'[1]

At the outset of this chapter, the apostle appeals to a principle which is vigorously at work in every bosom; and from its felt and conscious existence within us, would he press upon our belief the reality of the same principle, as residing in the Godhead—as applied by Him to every creature who is capable of exercising it in his own mind; and leading to a result, that will be verified on the great day of the winding up of this world's administration. By nature we are slow to self-condemnation; and, beset with the engrossments of our own passion and our own interest, we see not in ourselves the criminality of the same things which we reprobate in others; and conscience either passes no verdict at all, or in such a faint and gentle whisper that it is not heard, when it takes a rare and a feeble cognizance of our own character. But the self-love, which deafens the voice of conscience in its application to our own case, lays no such barrier in its way when it pronounces on the case of others. And hence the familiar spectacle, of, not merely an adverse judgment, but even of a

[1] 2 Corinthians, iv, 8.

wrath and an indignation in the mind of one man against the vanity or the dishonesty or the calumnies of another, to the evil of which he is blind or insensible when exemplified in an equal degree upon his own person.

Now this very judging of others, proves that there is in him a capacity for this exercise. It shows that there is a moral light and a moral sense still residing in his bosom. It proves a sense of the difference between right and wrong; and that when a certain veil is lifted away from the materials of the examination, so as to bring his mind into a more unclouded discernment of them—then, there is in that mind a conscience, which can operate and pronounce aright, upon what is meritorious and what is blameworthy in the character of man. Should that man be himself, and should this circumstance throw a darkening shroud over the field of examination, it surely is no palliation of his sinfulness, nor does it render him less amenable to the judgment of God, if this shroud which hides his own character from his own eyes be drawn over it by his own selfishness. You cannot allege his blindness in mitigation of the sentence that is to go forth against him, if it be a blindness which has no place in reference to the faults of other men; and only gathers again over the organs of his moral discernment, when the hand of his own partiality sets up a screen between the eye of his conscience and the equal or perhaps surpassing faults of his own character. The mere fact that he can and does judge of others, proves that a law of right and wrong is present with him. The fact that he does

not so judge of himself, only proves, not that he is without the light of moral truth like the beasts that perish—but that he keeps down that truth by unrighteousness; that when its voice is so stifled as to be unheard, it is he himself who stifles it; that his blindness is not the natural incapacity of an animal, but the wilful and chosen and much-loved blindness of a depraved man. If you see one of our species judging certain things in the conduct of another, infer from this that he knows of a code to which by his own voice he awards a moral authority. If you see him not judging in the same way of the same things in himself, consider this as a wilful suppression of the truth, which does not extenuate, but which in every way heightens his guilt, and turns his moral insensibility, not into a plea, but into an aggravation. And if there be not a country in the world, where this twofold exhibition is not to be witnessed—if, even among the rudest wanderers of the desert, there is the tact of a moral discernment between what is fair and what is injurious in the character of man—if in the fierce contests of savages, you see them capable of being alive to the injustice of others, while in the wild and untamed rapacity of their natures, they experience no check from the sense and conviction of their own—Then be assured, that, on the great day of account, will it be found, that there is a law which can reach even unto them; and a retribution of equity which can be rendered unto them; and a vengeance which, in despite of every plea and every palliation that can be offered for these darkest and most degraded of our brethren, can be

righteously inflicted—Making it manifest, that a judgment-seat may be set up on the last day of our world; and that around it, from its remotest corners, all the men of all its generations may be assembled; and that not one of them will be found to have lived without the scope and limits of a jurisdiction, on the principles of which he may rightfully be tried—so as that yet the triumph of God's justice shall be signalized upon every individual; nor will there be a single doom pronounced upon any creature, in any one department of the great moral territory, that is not strictly accordant with this song of Revelation—"Even so, Lord God Almighty! true and righteous are thy judgments; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints."

But let us look nearer home. There is not an exercise more familiar to your own hearts, than that by which you feel the demerits of others, and judge of them accordingly. The very movements of anger within you are connected with a sense of right and wrong—such a sense as evinces you to be in possession of a law, which you can bring to bear in examination and condemnation upon the doings of man; and should this law be evaded through the duplicities and the deceits of selfishness, in its application to yourself—then know that a principle so universal among mankind, in reference to their judgments the one of the other, is of unfailing operation in the mind of the Deity, and will be applied by Him to all who by the mere possession of a moral faculty prove themselves to be the fitting subjects of His moral cognizance. If

in the whole course of your existence, you ever judged another, this renders you at that one time a right and proper subject of judgment yourself; and if this be your daily and habitual exercise, insomuch that any development of vanity or selfishness or unfairness in another is sure to call out from you a feeling of condemnation, then this proves that you are hourly and habitually the rightful subjects of a moral guardianship and a moral jurisdiction. The faculty you have, is but a secondary impress of that superior and pervading faculty which belongs to God, as the judge of all and the lawgiver of all. Be assured that there is a presiding justice in His administration; that there is a moral government founded on a righteousness, the lessons of which are more or less known by all, and the sanctions of which will be accordingly fulfilled upon all. Your very power of judging others, proves that its lessons are in some degree known to you. And think not, O man which judgest those who do such and such things, and doest the same, that thou wilt escape the judgment of God.

God, in the day of final account, will find out in the case of every human being whom He does condemn, the materials of his valid condemnation. These materials may in a great measure be hidden from us now; and yet the palpable fact of each being able morally to judge another, and to pass his moral opinion upon another, however little he may be disposed to scrutinize himself, forms a very palpable disclosure of the fact, that there is in our hearts the sense of a moral law—a monitor who, if

we do not follow him as our guide here, will be our accusing witness hereafter. And from every feeling of reprobation, if not from every feeling of resentment towards others of which we are capable, we may gather assurance of the fact, that there does exist within us such a sense of the distinction between right and wrong, as, if not acted on in our own conduct, will be enough to convict us of a latent iniquity, and to call down upon us a rightful sentence of condemnation.

So long as self is the subject of its overseership, the moral sense may be partial or reluctant or altogether negligent of its testimonies. But if it can give those testimonies clearly enough and feelingly enough, when it casts a superintending eye over the conduct of others, this proves that an inward witness could speak also to us, but does not, because we have bribed him into silence. In other words, it will be found on the last day, that we had light enough to conduct us if we would have followed, and to condemn us if we have either refused or wilfully darkened its intimations. So that God will be clear when He speaketh and justified when He judgeth. He will wipe His hands of every outcast on that great and solemn occasion; and make it evident that the guilt of all the iniquities for which he is punished is at his own door—that there is no unrighteousness of severity with God, but that 'His judgment is indeed according to truth when it is against them who commit such things.'

The apostle affirms his own sureness of this, and with a view to make us sure of it also. The truth is,

that a want of belief in God as a Judge, is nearly as prevalent as the want of belief in Christ as a Saviour. Could the one be established within you, it would create an enquiry and a restlessness and an alarm, which might soon issue in the attainment of the other. But the general habit of the world proves, that, in reference to God as a God of judgment, there is a profound and a prevailing sleep among its generations. The children of alienated and degenerate Nature, are no more awake to the law in all the unchangeableness of its present authority, and in all the certainty of its coming terrors —than they are awake to the gospel in the freedom of its offers, and in the sureness of its redemption, and in the exceeding greatness and preciousness of all its promises. There is just as little sense of the disease, as there is little of esteem for the remedy. Theologians accordingly tell us of the faith of the law, and of the faith of the gospel. By the one we believe what the law reveals, in regard to its own requirements and its own sanctions. By the other we believe what the gospel reveals, in regard to its own proposals and its own invitations and its own privileges. Faith attaches itself to the law as well as to the gospel; and obedience to the gospel as well as to the law. The apostle here speaks of our not obeying the truth—and the psalmist says—"Lord, I have believed thy commandments." The truth is, that, among the men of our listless and secure species, there is no realizing sense of their being under the law—or of their being under the haunting control and inspection of a Lawgiver. Their habit is that of

walking in the counsel of their own hearts and in the sight of their own eyes—nor do they feel, in the waywardness of their self-originating movements, that they are the servants of another and amenable to the judgment of another. Let a man just attend to the current of his thoughts and purposes and desires, throughout the course of a whole day's business; and he will find how lamentably the impression of a divine superintendence, and the sense of a heavenly and unseen witness, are away from his heart. This will not excuse his habitual ungodliness—due, as we have often affirmed it to be, to the wilful smothering of convictions, which, but for wilful depravity, he might have had. But such being the real insensibility of man to his own condition as a responsible and an amenable creature, it is well that by such strenuous affirmations as those of the apostle, he should be reminded of the sureness wherewith God will appoint a day in righteousness; and institute a judgment over the quick and the dead.

Unbelief is not so much a dissent of the mind from any one particular truth or doctrine of revelation, as a darkness of the mind which intercepts a realizing view of all the truths and all the objects that lie spread over the region of spirituality. The clearing away of this darkness renders these objects visible; and it is a variation in the order of their disclosure which forms one chief cause of the varieties of religious experience. Some catch in the first instance a view of the law, scattering, as if from the mouth of a volcano, its menaces and its terrors on all the children of disobedience; and it is not

till after a dreary interval of discomposure and distress, that they behold the mantle lifted away from that stronghold into which all of them flee as an escape and a resting place. Others again catch at the outset a milder and a quieter ray from the light of the Sun of Righteousness; and it is not till they have been conducted within the fold of a most sure and ample mediatorship, and from whence they may look tranquilly and at a safe and protected distance on all around them—it is not till then, that they are made to see the hatefulness of sin, and all the dread and all the dignity of God's fiery denunciations against it. These things follow each other by a different succession with different individuals; but certain it is that the most partial glimpse of the smallest portion of the whole territory of faith, is greatly more to be desired, than the deep and sunken and unalleviated carnality of him, who is wholly given unto things present and things sensible; and even he, to whom the guilt and danger alone have been unfolded, is far more hopefully conditioned, than he, who, alike insensible to the wrath of God the Judge, and to the beseeching voice of God the Saviour, has taken up with time as his portion and his all; and, living as he lists, lives in the enjoyment of a peace, which, if not broken up ere he dies, a few years will demonstrate to have been indeed a fatal and then irrecoverable delusion.

The 4th verse of this chapter has been referred to by Peter in his second epistle—wherein he also explains why it is that God does not cut short the present stage of His administration—why it is,

that He tolerates so long the succession of one sinful generation after another—why it is, that He sweeps not away such a moral nuisance as our rebellious world, and so have done with it—why it is, for example, that at this very hour we see not the symptoms of dissolving nature, and hear not the trumpet of preparation for the solemnities of the last day, and feel not the heat of melting elements, or the shaking of the ground from under us—But, instead of these, why it is that all is going on in its wonted order, and the sun moves as steadily, and the seasons roll as surely, and all the successions of nature follow each other with as undisturbed regularity, as if destined so to abide, and so to persevere even unto eternity.

We know not the theory of ungodly men upon this subject, but their practice speaks most intelligibly what they feel about it. They tread upon this world's surface as firmly, as if the world stood on a secure and everlasting foundation. They prosecute this world's objects as strenuously, as if in the gaining their little portion of it, they gained a value which in exchange would be greater than the value of men's souls. They toil and calculate and devise for this world's interests, with as intense and undivided earnestness, as if they and the world were never to be separated. In the face of evidence—in the face of experience—in the face of all they know about death, and of all that has been revealed to them about judgment and retribution and the final wreck of the present system of things, do they assign a character of perpetuity to what is seen and sensible around them; nor could they possibly labour

more devotedly in the pursuits of time, though they themselves were to continue here for ever, and all things to continue as they were from the beginning of the creation."

Such is the practical impression of a natural man about the life that he lives in the world; and all his habits of life and business are founded upon it. But how different from the revelation of its design and purpose as given by the apostles. It is a suspension of the wrath of God against sinners, that space may be allowed for repentance. It is that He, not willing that any should perish, but that all should return, forbears the infliction of His final vengeance till they have got their opportunity. The perverse interpretation which a worldly man puts upon the continuance of the world, is, that the world is worthy of all his affections; and that it is his wisdom to rear upon its basis the fabric of his hopes. He misses the altogether different conclusion which should be drawn from it—that this continuance is due to the goodness of God, lengthening out to him and to us all the season of an offered indemnity, and of a proclaimed pardon, and of an inviting gospel with the whole of its privileges and blessings—and so, not knowing that this goodness, instead of rivetting him more to the world should lead him to forsake the love of it for the love of its Maker, does he misunderstand and misapply the bearing of time upon eternity.

What we have already noticed, about the alternative character of that dispensation under which we sit, is strikingly brought out in the verses be-

fore us. Goodness to the innocent, or goodness to the deserving, merely displays this attribute in a state of simplicity; but the goodness which remains unquelled and unexhausted after it has been sinned against—the goodness which persists in multiplying upon the transgressor the chances of his recovery, and that in the midst of affront and opposition—the goodness which, loth to inflict the retaliating blow, still holds out a little longer and a little longer; and, with all the means in its power of avenging the insults of disobedience, still ekes out the season for its return, and plies it with all the encouragements of a free pardon and an offered reconciliation—This is the exuberance of goodness, this is the richness of forbearance and long-suffering; and it is the very display which God is now making in reference to our world. And by every year which rolls over our heads—by every morning in which we find that we have awoke to the light of a new day, instead of awaking in torment —by every hour and every minute through which the stroke of death is suspended, and you still continue a breathing man in the land of gospel calls and gospel invitations—is God now justifying His goodness towards you. And earnest as He is for your return, and heedless as you are of all this earnestness, does it call as time moves onwards for a higher and a higher exertion of forbearance on the part of the Divinity, to restrain His past and accumulating wrath, from being discharged on the head of those among whom though God entreats yet no man will turn, and though He stretch out His hand yet no man regardeth.

Now if such be the character of God in His relation to man, mark what character it stamps upon man should he remain unsoftened and unimpressed by it. It were offence enough to sin against the authority of a superior; but to sin against his forbearance forms a sore and a fatal aggravation. Thus to turn upon the long-suffering of God and to trample it—thus to pervert the season which He has allotted for repentance, into a season of more secure and presumptuous transgression—thus, upon every delay of vengeance with which He favours us, the more to strengthen ourselves in hard and haughty defiance against Him—This indeed is a highway of guilt, which, if you be not arrested therein, will lead to a sorer judgment and a deadlier consummation. Turn then all of you at the call of repentance, or it is the very highway on which you are treading. It is because He is rich in goodness, that we have been spared to this present moment of our history; and now hear Him in the very language of His own revelation bid you turn and turn, for why will you die. But if you will not draw from the treasures of His forbearance, there is treasure of another kind that is heaping by every day of your neglected salvation, in a storehouse of vengeance; and which, on the great day when God shall ease Him of all His adversaries, will all be poured forth upon you. And thus it is, that if you despise the riches of His goodness and forbearance and long-suffering, and suffer not them to lead you to repentance, you will by your hardness and impenitency, treasure up unto yourselves wrath against

the day of wrath, and revelation of the righteous judgments of God.

Let us therefore, in plain urgency, bid you repent; and, untrammelled by system, set before you, as the apostle does, both the coming wrath and the coming glory; and tell you that the one is to him who doeth evil, and that the other is to him who doeth well; and we may be sure that there is nothing in faith, or in any of its mysteries, which will supersede the day of judgment as it is recorded in the passage here before us. The apostle is not only describing what would have happened under the first covenant, but what will happen under the second. For though justified by faith, we shall be judged by works; and let not the one of these articles be so contrasted with the other, as to throw a shade either of neglect or insignificance over it. When rightly understood, they reflect upon each other a mutual lustre, and lend to each other a mutual confirmation. Faith is the high road to repentance. Our acceptance of the righteousness of Christ as our title for an entrance into heaven, is an essential stepping-stone to our own personal righteousness as our preparation for the joys and the exercises of heaven; and if there be a stirring of conscience and an agitation of alarm in any of your hearts, under the sense of your not being what you ought to be—we can do nothing more effectual, than to propose the blood of Christ to your faith, in order that under the transforming and sanctifying influence of such a belief, you both be what you ought and do what you ought.

The great object of the apostle's demonstration

is, that men should make their escape from the penalties of the law, to the hiding-place provided for them in the gospel. And though he here intimates the rewards which it holds out to obedience, and the fearful vengeance which it holds out against transgression—yet he does not intimate that any individual ever earned the one, or ever secured by his own righteousness an exemption from the other. His object is to make known to us the constitution or the economy of God's government, that, should any of its subjects fulfil all its requisitions, they should be rewarded; but without saying that they actually did so—or, that, should any of its subjects fail in those requisitions they would be punished; but without telling us whether any or some or all come under this condemnation. How it was that they actually did conduct themselves under this administration, he tells us afterwards—when he says of all, both Jews and Gentiles, that they were under sin; and that by the deeds of the law no flesh can be justified, for that all had sinned and come short of the glory of God.

And yet after all there will be a judgment; and this judgment will proceed upon each individual according to the deeds done in his body; and it is upon those who bring forth fruit with patience, or who maintain a patient continuance in well-doing, that these accents of invitation will descend—"Well done, thou good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord;" and it is also upon those who are contentious and obey not the truth but obey unrighteousness, that the awful bidding away to the everlasting fire prepared

for the devil and his angels will be pronounced, by Him who conducts the solemnities of that great occasion. But then, as we read afterwards, it will be Jesus Christ to whom this judgment will be committed; and the judgment will be according to "my gospel," or the gospel which the apostle proclaims to his hearers. The judgment of condemnation will be upon those who have withstood its overtures; or who, if these overtures had never reached them, have withstood the instigations of their own conscience, which ought to have been a law unto them. And the judgment of acquittal will be upon those who have obeyed the truth, or who have rendered obedience unto the faith—those whose persons and whose works are accepted for the sake of a better righteousness than their own—those who, after they believed, were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, and were made the workmanship of God in Christ Jesus, and were created anew unto good works. So that, after the first covenant has been superseded by the second—after man has become dead unto the law and made alive unto Christ—after all its demands have been satisfied, and it has no more power to challenge or to condemn him who truly believes in Jesus, Jesus himself takes up the judgment of him, and tries him on the question whether he is actually a believer; and the deeds done in the body are the evidences of this question, and make it manifest on that day that the faith which he professed was no counterfeit, being fruitful in all those works of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ unto the praise and glory of God.

LECTURE VII.

ROMANS, ii, 12—29.

"For as many as have sinned without law shall also perish without law: and as many as have sinned in the law shall be judged by the law; (for not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified. For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves: which show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another,) in the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel. Behold, thou art called a Jew, and restest in the law, and makest thy boast of God, and knowest his will, and approvest the things that are more excellent, being instructed out of the law; and art confident that thou thyself art a guide of the blind, a light of them which are in darkness, an instructor of the foolish, a teacher of babes, which hast the form of knowledge and of the truth in the law. Thou therefore which teachest another, teachest thou not thyself? thou that preachest a man should not steal, dost thou steal? thou that sayest a man should not commit adultery, dost thou commit adultery? thou that abhorrest idols, dost thou commit sacrilege? thou that makest thy boast of the law, through breaking the law dishonourest thou God? for the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles through you, as it is written. For circumcision verily profiteth, if thou keep the law: but if thou be a breaker of the law, thy circumcision is made uncircumcision. Therefore if the uncircumcision keep the righteousness of the law, shall not his uncircumcision be counted for circumcision? and shall not uncircumcision which is by nature, if it fulfil the law, judge thee, who by the letter and circumcision dost transgress the law? For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision which is outward in the flesh: but he is a Jew which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God."

VER. 12. Without a written law as the Jews had

—they shall perish without being judged by that law. There will be another law to judge them —and, whosoever perishes, it will not be the consequence of a condemnation brought to bear upon him by a law which he did not know of. They who have sinned in the law, that is in the written law, are they who have sinned under that law—the Jews who will be judged by it. Ver. 13. There is a term which we may often have to recur to—and which we therefore shall explain at present. Some would have it that justification in the New Testament means the making of a man personally just. Conceive a thief, for example, to undergo such a transformation of character as that he henceforward is honest in all his transactions—this would be making him a just person; or, in the sense which some choose to assign to the word, it would be justifying him. We believe it may be made out, in almost every place where it occurs, that this is not the real meaning of the term—that it should be taken, not in a personal, but in what may be called a forensic signification—or, that to justify, instead of meaning to make just by a process of operation upon the character, means to pronounce or to declare just by the sentence of a judicial court. This is called the *forensic* sense of the term, because a court of justice was anciently called a forum; and it is evident that, here at least, the word must be understood forensically—for the doers of the law do not need to be made just personally. They are already so; and therefore for them to be justified, is to be declared just by the sentence of him who administers the law. Ver. 15. There

seem here to be two distinct proofs of the Gentiles being a law unto themselves. The first is from the fact of there being a conscience individually at work in each bosom, and deponing either to the merit or the demerit of actions. The second from the fact of their accusing or excusing one another, in the reasonings or disputes which took place between man and man. For what is translated 'thoughts,' may be rendered into dialectic reasonings, or disputes which one man has with another, when a question of right or justice is started between them. It proves them to be in possession of a common rule, or standard of judging, or, in other words, that a law is actually among them. So true is it, even in its application to the Gentiles, that there is a light which lighteth every man who cometh into the world. Ver. 22. To commit sacrilege, or to take to our private use, that which is consecrated to God. This is what might very readily be brought home to a Jewish conscience—it being matter of frequent complaint against the Jews, that they offered what was lame and defective in sacrifice. Ver. 24. This is written for example, in Ezekiel, xxxvi, 20, where it is said that the Heathen in mockery said unto the people of Israel when they were carried away captive—"These are the people of the Lord and are gone forth out of his land."

This is all that needs to be advanced in the way of exposition—and the following is a paraphrase of this passage.

'For as many as have sinned without law, shall also perish, not by the condemnation of that law,

which they had not, but of another which they had; and as many as have sinned who were under the dispensation of the written law, shall by that law be judged. For, as to the Jews, they are not the hearers of the law who are reckoned just before God; but they are the doers of the law only who shall be justified. And, as to the Gentiles, they having not the law of Mount Sinai, yet, when by nature they do the things contained in that law, these, though without a written code, have a something in its place which to them has all the authority of a law. For they show that the matter of the law is written in their hearts—both from their conscience testifying what is right and wrong in their own conduct, and from their reasonings in which they either accuse or vindicate one another. No man shall be judged by a law known only to others and unknown to himself; but all shall be judged by the light which belonged to them, in that day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ, and agreeably to the gospel which I now declare unto you. Behold, thou art called a Jew, and hast a confidence in thy law, and makest a boast of thy peculiar relationship with God, and thou knowest His will, and canst both distinguish and approve the things which are more excellent—being instructed out of thy law. And, with all this superior advantage, thou lookest upon thyself as a guide of the blind, and as a light of them who are in darkness, and as an instructor of the ignorant, and as a teacher of babes—seeing that thou hast the whole summary of knowledge and truth which is in the law. But it is not he who

heareth, or he who knoweth, but he who doeth that shall be justified; and dost thou who teachest another, teach effectually thyself?—thou who proclaimest that a man should not steal, dost thou steal?—thou who sayest that a man should not commit adultery, dost thou commit adultery?—thou who abhorrest idols, dost thou rob God of His temple offerings?—thou who makest thy boast of the law, through the breaking of the law dost thou dishonour God? For we have it upon record, that through you the name of God has been blasphemed. For your circumcision, and other outward observances which form the great visible distinction between you and the Gentiles—these are profitable if you keep the whole law; but if you break the law, the keeping of its external ordinances will not raise you above the level of those who know them not, and practise them not. But, on the other hand, if these latter do by nature the things which by the light of nature they know to be lawful, and so keep righteousness as far as they are informed of it—though they have not practised the literal and outward ordinances, they shall be dealt with as if they had kept them. And what is more, they will even have such a superiority, as to sit in judgment over you, who, notwithstanding your written law and your ordinances, are in fact transgressors of the law. For he is not a right Jew who is only one outwardly. Neither is that the circumcision that is regarded by God, which is outwardly in the flesh. But he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and the genuine circumcision is that of a heart subject to the spirit of the law, and

therefore crucified as to its carnal affections, and not that of a mere outward conformity to its visible observations. And the praise of this real circumcision is not of man, who can judge only according to appearances; but of God, who weigheth the secrets of the spirit, and who can alone judge righteously.'

Let us now pass onward to a few practical observations, founded on the passage which we have attempted to explain.

You can readily enough perceive, how, both with Jews and Christians, there are materials enough for such an examination, as renders them the fit subjects both of a reckoning and of a sentence on the great day of account. But this is not so immediately seen in regard to rude and uninformed Paganism. To be without the pale of a written revelation, is held by many, as tantamount, to being without the pale of all moral and judicial cognizance. And yet, we have many intimations, that the Heathen will also be brought to the bar of the general judgment—that, though perhaps more gently dealt with, yet they will be dealt with as the responsible subjects of God's moral administration—that there is a principle of judgment which reaches even unto them, and upon which it will be a righteous thing for God to pass upon them a condemnatory sentence—Sodom and Gomorrah, we are informed, being to be sisted before the tribunal of that day; and a punishment awarded them, which will only be more tolerable than the vengeance that awaits those, who have sinned in the face of clearer light, and better opportunities.

Insomuch, that we know not of any age, however far back it may lie removed in the darkness of antiquity; nor do we know of any wandering tribe, however secluded from all the communications of light and knowledge with the rest of the species—the men of which will not be called before the great tribunal of humanity, and there, on the review of their doings in this world, will have such a place and such a portion assigned to them in the next, as shall be in fullest harmony with the saying that all the ways of God are in truth and in righteousness.

It were repeating over here what we have already more than once and on various occasions endeavoured to argument, did we again enter upon the question, How this can be? The Heathen will not be judged by the written law of Judaism, neither will they be judged out of the things that are written in the Scriptures of Christianity. God will not, in their case, charge them with the guilt of a sin, for that which they were not taught and could not know to be sinful. It is not their helpless ignorance, and it is not the fatality of their birth, and it is not the thick moral envelopment that has settled itself over the face of their country which will condemn them. It will be their sin, and that coupled with the circumstances of their knowing it to be sin, which will condemn them. And we have already remarked in one lecture, that there do exist, even in the remotest tracts of Paganism, such vestiges of light, as, when collected together, form a code or directory of moral conduct—that there are still to be found among them

the fragments of a law, which they never follow but with an approving conscience; and never violate but with the check of an opposing remonstrance, that by their own wilfulness and their own obstinacy is overborne—in other words, that they are a law unto themselves, and that their own conscience vests it with an authority, by bearing witness to the rightness and obligation of its requirements—So that, among the secret things which will be brought to light in the great day of revelation, will it be seen, that all the sin for which a Heathen shall be made to suffer, was sin committed in the face of an inward monitor, which warned him through time, and will condemn him at his outset upon eternity.

In another lecture we observed, that what brought the conscience of Paganism palpably out from its hiding-place, was the undeniable fact of the charges and the recriminations and the defences of which the most unenlightened Pagans were capable in their controversies with each other. This capacity of accusing and of excusing proved a sense and a standard of morality to be amongst them. With the feeling of provocation after injury, was there mixed the judgment of a difference between the right and the wrong—and even in the rude outcry of savage resentment and the fierce onset of savage warfare, may we detect their perception of what is honest and what is unfair in the dealings of man with man. And just grant of any individual amongst them, that he is keenly alive to the injustice of others to himself, while, under the hurrying instigations of selfishness and

passion, he works the very same injustice against them; and you make that individual a moral and an accountable being. We grant him to be sensible of what he ought to do, and thus make him the rightful subject of condemnation if he does it not. 'For thinkest thou, O man, that judgest them who do these things, and doest them thyself, that thou wilt escape the judgment of God?' Even we therefore, unknowing as we are of the inward machinery of another's heart, can trace as it were an avenue by which the most unlettered barbarian might be approached in the way of judgment and retribution. And much more may we be sure, that God, who judgeth all things, will find a clear and open path to the fulfilment of the process that there is here laid before us—summoning all to their account, without exception; and, from the farthest limits of the human territory, calling Heathens to His jurisdiction, as well as Christians and Jews, and, under a law appropriate to each, dealing out the distributions of equity among the various families and denominations of the world.

In this passage, the apostle, after the gradual and skilful approaches which he had made for the purpose of finding his way to the Jewish understanding, at length breaks out into the warfare of open and proclaimed argument. He throws out his express challenge, and closes with his adversary —thus entering upon the main business of his Epistle, the great object of which was to bring over his own countrymen to the obedience of the faith. After affirming of the two great classes of

mankind, that each was subject to a law of its own acknowledging; and after, upon this principle, having convicted the Gentile world of its being under sin—he addresses himself to the Israelite, and dexterously lays open the egregious folly of his confidence—a confidence resting, it would appear, not on his practice of the law, but barely on his possession of it—a satisfaction with himself, not for following the light, but simply for having the light—an arrogant sense of superiority to others, not in having obeyed the commandment, but just in having had the commandment delivered to him—thus turning into a matter of vanity, that which ought in fact to have aggravated his shame and condemnation; and bearing it proudly over others, who, had they acted up to their more slender advantages, would in fact have been entitled to sit in judgment and superiority over him.

It is observable, that, in this work of convincing the Jews of sin, the apostle fastens, in the first instance, on the more glaring and visible delinquencies from the law of righteousness—as theft and adultery and sacrilege. He brings forth that which is fitted to strike conviction into the breast of a notorious transgressor; who, just because the evidence of his guilt is more palpable than that of others—just because the materials of his condemnation more immediately meet the eye of his own conscience—is, on that very account, often more easily induced to take the first steps of that process which leads to reconciliation with the offended Lawgiver. And this is the reason, why it is said of publicans and profligate persons, that they enter the kingdom of

Heaven, before the Scribes and the Pharisees. But the apostle is not satisfied with convincing them only. Before he is done with his demonstration about the law, he enters into the very depths of it—even as the Saviour, in his sermon on the mount, did before him. It is possible to undergo the outward rite of circumcision, and not be circumcised in the spirit of our minds. And it is possible to maintain a conformity with all those requirements which bear on the external conduct, without having a heart touched by the love of God, or in any way animated by the principle of godliness. He does not end his demonstration of sinfulness, till he has completed it; and, while the first attack of his expostulation is directed against those who do the overt acts and wear the visible insignia of rebellion, he sends it with a penetrating force into the recesses of a more plausible and pleasing character—where, with nothing to deform or to shed a disgrace over the outward history, there may be a heart still uncircumcised out of all its affections to the creature, and utterly alive unto the world, and utterly dead unto God.

We conclude with two remarks, in the way of home and personal application, founded on the two senses given to the word letter as contrasted with the word spirit.

The first sense that is given to the word letter, is the outward conformity to the law, which may be rendered apart from the inward principle of reverence or regard for it.

Now it is not merely true that your sabbaths and your sacraments may be as useless to you, as the

rite of circumcision ever was to the Jews. It is not merely true that the whole ceremonial of Christianity may be duly and regularly described on your part, without praise or without acceptance on the part of God. It is not merely true that worship may be held every day in your own houses, and your families be mustered at every recurring opportunity to close and unfailing attendance on the house of God. But it is also true, that all the moral honesties of life may be rendered; and in the walks of honourable merchandise, there ever be attached to your name, the respect and confidence of all the righteous; and, foremost in the lists of philanthropy, every scheme connected with its cause may draw out from you the largest and most liberal ministrations: and even all this, so far from the mere forcing of an outward exhibition, may emanate upon your visible doings, from the internal operation of a native regard for your brethren of the same species, and of a high-minded integrity in all your transactions with them. And yet one thing may be lacking. The circumcision of the heart may be that which you have no part in. All its longings may be towards the affairs and the enjoyments and the interests of mortality. Your taste is not to what is sordid, but to what is splendid in character; but still it is but an earthly and a perishable splendour. Your very virtues are but the virtues of the world. They have not upon them the impress of that saintliness which will bear to be transplanted into heaven. The present and the peopled region of sense on which you expatiate, you deck, it is true, with the lustre of many fine accom-

plishments; but they have neither the stamp nor the endurance of eternity: And, difficult as it was to convict the Hebrew of sin, robed in the sanctities of a revered and imposing ceremonial, it is at least a task of as great strenuousness to lay the humiliation of the gospel spirit upon him, who lives surrounded by the smiles and the applauses of society —or so to awaken the blindness, and circumcise the vanity of his heart, as to bring him down a humble supplicant at the footstool of mercy.

What turns the virtues of earth into splendid sins, is that nothing of God is there. It is the want of this animating breath, which impresses upon them all the worthlessness of materialism. It is this which makes all the native loveliness of our moral world of as little account, in the pure and spiritual reckoning of the upper sanctuary, as is a mere efflorescence of beauty on the face of the vegetable creation. It serves to adorn and even to sustain the interests of a fleeting generation. Verily it hath its reward. But not till, under a sense of nothingness and of guilt, man hies him to the cross of expiation—not till, renouncing all righteousness of his own, he flees for shelter to the righteousness of Christ, as that alone which is commensurate to the demands, and congenial with the holy character of the Lawgiver—not till, in the attitude of one whose breast is humbled out of all its proud complacencies, he receives the atonement of the gospel, and along with it receives a clean heart and a right spirit from the hand of his accepted Mediator—It is not till the period of such a transformation, when he is made the workmanship of God in Christ Jesus,

that the true image of moral excellence which was obliterated from our species at the fall, comes to be restored to him, or that he is put in the way of attaining a resemblance to his Maker in righteousness and in true holiness.

We meant to have added another remark founded on another sense of the word letter, which is the word of God as opposed to the Spirit of God. But we have no time to expatiate any further. Let us only observe that the apostle speaks both of the letter and spirit of the New Testament. And certain it is, that, were we asked to fix on a living counterpart in the present day to the Jew of the passage now under consideration—it would be on him, who, thoroughly versant in all the phrases and dexterous in all the arguments of orthodoxy, is, without one affection of the old man circumcised and without one sanctified affection to mark him the new man in Christ Jesus our Lord, withal, a zealous and staunch and sturdy controversialist. He too rests in the form of sound words, and is confident that he is a light of the blind, and founds a complacency on knowledge though it be knowledge without love and without regeneration—nor can we think of any delusion more hazardous, and at the same time more humbling, than that by which a literal acquaintance with the gospel, and a literal adherence on the part of the understanding to all its truths and all its articles, may be confounded with the faith which is unto salvation. Faith is an inlet to holy affections. Its primary office is to admit truth into the mind, but it is truth that impresses as well as informs. The kingdom of God is neither in word

alone, nor in argument alone—it is also in power; and while we bid you look unto Jesus and be saved, it is such a look as will cause you to mourn and to be in heaviness—it is such a look as will liken you to His image, and import into your own character the graces and the affections which adorn His. It is here that man finds himself at the limits of his helplessness. He cannot summon into his breast that influence which will either circumcise its old tendencies, or plant new ones in its room. But the doctrine of Jesus Christ and of Him crucified is the grand instrument for such a renovation; and he is at his post, and on the likely way of obtaining the clean heart and the right spirit, when, looking humbly and desirously to Jesus as all his salvation, he may at length experience the operation of faith working by love and yielding all manner of obedience.

LECTURE VIII.

ROMANS, iii, 1, 2.

"What advantage then hath the Jew? or what profit is there of circumcision? Much every way: chiefly, because that unto them were committed the oracles of God."

Our reason for stopping at this part of our ordinary course, and coming forward with a dissertation on these verses, is that the subject of them seems to guide us to a decision, in a matter that has been somewhat obscured with the difficulties of a hidden speculation. You are aware that to whom much is given, of them much will be required; and the question then comes to be, whether is it better that that thing shall be given or withheld. The Jew, who sinned against the light of his revelation, will have a severer measure of retribution dealt out to him—than the Gentile who only sinned against the light of his own conscience; and the nations of Christendom who have been plied with the offers of the gospel, and put them needlessly and contemptuously away, will incur a darker doom throughout eternity—than the native of China, whose remoteness, while it shelters him from the light of the New Testament in this world, shelters him from the pain of its fulfilled denunciations in another; and he who sits a hearer under the most pure and faithful ministrations of the word of God, has more to answer for—than he who languishes under the lack either of arousing sermons, or of solemn and

impressive ordinances; and neither will a righteous God deal so hardly with the members of a population, where reading is unknown, and the Bible remains an inaccessible rarity among the families—as of a population where schools have been multiplied for the behoof of all, and scholarship has descended and is diffused among the poorest of the commonwealth. And with these considerations, a shade of uncertainty appears to pass over the question—whether the christianization of a people ought at all to be meddled with. If the gospel of Jesus Christ only serve to exalt the moral and everlasting condition of the few who receive it, because to them it is the savour of life unto life; but serve also to aggravate the condition of those who reject it, because to them the savour of death unto death—whether should a nation now sitting in the darkness of Paganism, be approached with the overtures of the gospel? This is a doubt which has often been advanced, for the purpose of throwing discouragement and discredit on the enterprise of missionaries; and though not on exactly the same principle, are there many still, who hesitate on the measure of spreading education among the peasantry. Altogether, it were desirable, in this age of benevolent enterprise, to know whether it is the part of benevolence to move in this matter, or to sit still and let the world remain stationary—leaving it to that milder treatment, and those gentler chastisements, which the guilt of man, when associated with the ignorance of man, will call down on the great day from the hand of Him who both judgeth and administers righteously.

We think it must be obvious, to those whose minds have been at all disciplined into the soberness of wisdom and true philosophy, that, without an authoritative solution of this question from God Himself, we are really not in circumstances to determine it. We have not all the materials of the question before us. We know not how to state with the precision of arithmetic, what the addition is which knowledge confers upon the sufferings of disobedience; or how far an accepted gospel exalts the condition of him, who was before a stranger to it. We cannot balance the one against the other, or render to you any computation of the difference that there is between them. We cannot descend into hell; and there take the dimensions of that fiercer wrath and tribulation and anguish, which are laid on those who have incurred the guilt of a rejected Christianity—and neither can we ascend into heaven; and there calculate the heights of blessedness and joy, to which Christianity has raised the condition of those who have embraced it. It is all a matter of revelation on which side the difference lies; and he who is satisfied to be wise up to that which is written, and feels no wayward restlessness of ambition after the wisdom that is beyond it, will quietly repose upon the deliverance of Scripture on this subject; and never will the surmises or the speculations of an uninformed world, lay an obstacle on him, as he moves along the path of his plainly bidden obedience; nor will all the hazards and uncertainties, which the human imagination shall conjure up from the brooding abyss of human ignorance, embarrass him in the

execution of an obviously prescribed task. So that if in any way Christ must be preached; and if in the face of consequences, known or unknown, the knowledge of Him must be spread abroad to the uttermost; and if he be required, at this employment, to be instant in season and out of season, declaring unto all the way of salvation as he has opportunity—if these be the positive requirements of the Bible, then, whatever be the proportion which the blessings bear to the curses that he is the instrument of scattering on every side of him, enough for him that the authority of Heaven is the warrant of his exertions; and that, in making manifest the savour of the knowledge of the gospel in every place, he is unto God a sweet savour of Christ, both in them that are saved and in them that perish.

"Go and preach the Gospel to every creature under heaven," and "go unto all the world, and teach all nations." These parting words of our Saviour, ere He ascended to His Father, may not be enough to quell the anxieties of the speculative Christian; but they are quite enough to decide the course and the conduct of the practical Christian. To his mind, it sets the question of missions abroad, and also the question of schools and Bibles and christianizing processes at home, most thoroughly at rest. And though the revelation of the New Testament had not advanced one step farther, on that else untrodden field, where all that misery and all that enjoyment which are the attendant results upon a declared gospel in the world might be surveyed and confronted together—yet would he count

it his obligation simply to do the bidding of the word, though it had not met the whole of his appetite for information. But in the verses before us, we think it does advance this one step farther. It does appear to us, to enter on the question of profit and loss attendant on the possession of the oracles of God; and to decide, on the part of the former, that the advantage was much every way. And it is not for those individuals alone who reaped the benefit, that the apostle makes the calculation. He makes an abatement for the unbelief of all the others; and, balancing the difference, does he land us in a computation of clear gain to the whole people. And it bears importantly on this question, when we are thus told of a nation with whom we are historically acquainted, that it was better for them on the whole that they possessed the oracles of God. We may well venture to circulate these precious words among all people, when told of the most stiff-necked and rebellious people on earth, that, with all the abuse they made of their scriptures, these scriptures conferred not merely a glory, but a positive advantage on their nation. And yet what a fearful deduction from this advantage must have been made, by the wickedness that grew and gathered, and was handed down from one generation to another. If it be true of the majority of their kings, that they did evil in the sight of the Lord exceedingly; and if it be true that, with the light of revelation and amid the warnings of prophecy, they often rioted amongst the abominations of idolatry beyond even all the nations that were around them; and if it be true that the page of Jewish his-

tory is far more blackened by the recorded atrocity and guilt of the nation, than ever it is illumed by the memorials of worth or of piety; and if it be true that, throughout the series of many centuries which rolled over the heads of the children of Israel, while they kept the name and existence of a community, there was an almost incessant combat between the anger of an offended God and the perverseness of a stout-hearted and rebellious people—insomuch that, after the varied discipline of famine and invasion and captivity had been tried for ages and found to be fruitless, the whole fabric of the Hebrew commonwealth had by one tremendous discharge of fury to be utterly swept away—It were hard to tell, what is the amount of aggravation upon all this sin, in that it was sin against the light of the oracles of God; but the apostle in the text has told us, that, let the amount be what it may, it was more than countervailed by the positive good done through these oracles: and comparatively few as the righteous men were who walked in the ordinances and commandments of the Lord blameless; and however thinly sown were those worthies of the old dispensation, on whom the light that beamed from Heaven shed the exalting influences of faith and godliness; and though the upright of the land were counted but in minorities and in remnants, throughout almost every period of the nation's progress from its beginning to its overthrow—Yet it serves to guide our estimate of comparison between the gain and the loss of God's oracles in the midst of a country, when, with the undoubted fact of the few who had been made holy on the one hand,

and the many on whom they fastened a sorer condemnation upon the other, we are still told that the gain did preponderate—that the Jews who had the Scriptures had an advantage over the Gentiles who had them not—that any people are better of having among them the instrument which makes a man a child of light, even though in its operation it should stamp a deeper guilt upon ten men, and make them more the children of hell than before—that all the means therefore, which in their direct and rightful tendency have the effect to save and to enlighten human souls, should be set most strenuously agoing, even though these means should be resisted; and it is impossible but this offence must come, and a deadlier woe will be inflicted on all through whom such an offence cometh. Should the fishers of men rescue a few from the abyss of nature's guilt and nature's wretchedness, it would appear that in the work of doing so, they may be the instruments of sinking many deeper in that abyss than if it had never been disturbed or entered upon with such an operation. We have not the means of instituting a comparison between the quantity of good that is rendered by a small number being entirely extricated from the gulph of perdition, and the quantity of evil that ensues from a large number being more profoundly immersed in it than before. This is a secret which still lies in the womb of eternity; yet we cannot but think that a partial disclosure has been made, and the veil is in part lifted away from it, by the deliverance of our apostle. At all events it clears away the practical difficulties which are attendant on a missionary or

christianizing question, when we are here given to understand, that the Jews, with all the aggravations consequent on sin, when it is sin in the face of knowledge, were on the whole better in that they had the oracles of God.

Let us now follow up these introductory views, with a few brief remarks both on the speculative and on the practical part of this question.

First, then, as to the speculative part of it. The Bible, when brought into a new country, may be instrumental in saving the some who submit to its doctrine; and, in so doing, it saves them from an absolute condition of misery in which they were previously involved. It makes good to each of them, the difference that there is, between a state of great positive wretchedness and a state of great positive enjoyment. If along with this advantage to the few who receive it, it aggravates the condition of those who reject it, it is doubtless the instrument of working out for each of them an increment of misery. But it does not change into wretchedness, that which before was enjoyment. It only makes the wretchedness more intense; and the whole amount of the evil that has been rendered, is only to be computed by the difference in degree between the suffering that is laid upon sin with, and sin without the knowledge of the Saviour. We do not know how great the difference of misery is, to those many whose guilt has been aggravated by the neglect of an offered gospel; and we do not know how to compare it arithmetically, with the change from positive misery to positive enjoyment, which

is experienced by those few who have embraced the gospel. In the midst of all this uncertainty, there is room and place in our minds for the positive information of Scripture; and if we gather from it that it was better for the Jews, in spite of all the deeper responsibility and deeper consequent guilt which their possession of the Old Testament laid upon the perverse and disobedient of the nation, yet that a nett accession of gain was thus rendered to the whole—then may we infer that any enterprise by which the Bible is more extensively circulated, or more extensively taught, is of positive benefit to every neighbourhood which is the scene of such an operation.

But secondly.—Though in the Jewish history that has already elapsed, they were the few to whom the oracles of God were a blessing, and the many to whom they were an additional condemnation—yet, on the whole, did the good so predominate in its amount over the evil, that it on the whole was for the better and not for the worse that they possessed these oracles. But the argument gathers in strength, as we look onward to futurity—as, aided by the light of prophecy, we take a glimpse, however faint and distant, of millennial days—as we dwell upon the fact of the universal prevalence that the gospel of Jesus Christ is at length to reach in all the countries of the world—when we consider that all our present proportions shall at length be reversed; and that if Christians now be the few to the many, Christians then will be the many to the few. Even in this day of small things, the direct blessing which follows in the

train of a circulated Bible and a proclaimed gospel, overbalances the incidental evil; and when we think of the latter-day glory which it ushers in—when we think of that secure and lasting establishment which in all likelihood it will at length arrive at—when we compute the generations of that millennium which is awaiting a peopled and a cultivated world—when we try to fancy the magnificent results, which a labouring and progressive Christianity will then land in—who should shrink from the work of hastening it forward, because of a spectre conjured up from the abyss of human ignorance? Even did the evil now predominate over the good, still is a missionary enterprise like a magnanimous daring for a great moral and spiritual achievement, which will at length reward the perseverance of its devoted labourers. It is like a triumph for the whole species, purchased at the expense, not of those who shared in the toils of the undertaking, but of those who met with their unconcern or contempt, the benevolence which laboured to convert them. There are collateral evils attendant on the progress of Christianity. At one time it brings a sword instead of peace, and at another it stirs up a variance in families, and at all times does it deepen the guilt of those who resist the overtures which it makes to them. But these are only the perils of a voyage that is richly laden with the moral wealth of many future generations. These are but the hazards of a battle which terminates in the proudest and most productive of all victories—and, if the liberty of a great empire be an adequate return for the loss of the lives of its defenders, then is the glorious liberty

of the children of God, which will at length be extended over the face of a still enslaved and alienated world, more than an adequate return for the spiritual loss that is sustained by those, who, instead of fighting for the cause, have resisted and reviled it.

We now conclude with a few practical remarks.

First. It is with argument such as this, that we would meet the anti-missionary spirit, which, though a good deal softened and silenced of late years, still breaks forth occasionally into active opposition; or, when it forbears to be aggressive, still binds up the great body of professing Christians, in a sort of lethargic indifference to one of the worthiest of causes. The time is not far distant from us, when a christianizing enterprise was traduced as a kind of invasion on the safety and innocence of Paganism—when it was the burden of an eloquent and well-told regret, that the simplicity of Hindoo manners should so be violated—when something like the charm of the golden age was associated with these regions of primeval idolatry—and it was affirmed, that, though idolatry is blind, yet it were better not to awaken its worshippers, than to drag them forth by instruction to the hazards and the exposures of a more fearful responsibility. We trust you perceive from our text, that, even though the converts were few and the guilty scorners of the gospel message were many, yet still, on the principles of the apostolic reckoning, there may even during the first years of a much resisted Christianity, be an overplus of advantage. And why should we be restrained now from the work by a calculation, which did not restrain the

missionaries of two thousand years ago—when they made their first entrance on a world of nearly unbroken and unalleviated heathenism? Shall we, with our pigmy reach of anticipation, cast off the authority of precepts issued by Him who seeth the end from the beginning; and who can both bless the day of small things with a superiority of the good over the evil, and make it the dawn of such a glory as will far exceed the brightest visions in which a philanthropist can indulge? The direction at all events is imperative, and of standing obligation. It is "Go and preach the gospel to every creature," and "Go and preach unto all nations;" and you want one of the features of Him who standeth perfect and complete in the whole will of God—you are lacking in that complete image of what a Christian ought to be—if, without desire and without effort in behalf of that great process by which the whole world is at length to be called out from the darkness and the repose of its present alienation, you neither assist it with your substance nor remember it in your prayers.

But secondly. If man is to be kept in ignorance because every addition of light brings along with it an addition of responsibility—then ought the species to be arrested at home as well as abroad in its progress towards a more exalted state of humanity; and such evils as may attend the transition to moral and religious knowledge, should deter us from every attempt to rescue our own countrymen from any given amount of darkness by which they may now be encompassed.[1]

[1] We forbear to expatiate over again upon this particular

But lastly. However safe it is to commit the oracles of God into the hands of others, yet, considering ourselves in the light of those to whom these oracles are committed, it is a matter of urgent concern, whether, to us personally, the gain or the loss will predominate. It is even of present advantage to the nation at large, that the word of God circulates in such freedom and with such frequency among its numerous families. But this only—because the good rendered to some prevails over the evil of that additional guilt which is incurred by many. And still it resolves itself, with every separate individual, into the question of his secured heaven, or his more aggravated hell—whether he be of the some who turn the message of God into an instrument of conversion; or of the many who, by neglect and unconcern, render it the instrument of their sorer condemnation. It may be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah than for him in the day of judgment. To have been so approached from Heaven with the overtures of salvation, as every man is who has the Bible within his reach—to have had such invitations at your door as you may have had for the mere reading of them—to have been in the way of such a circular from God to our guilty species, which though expressly addressed to no one individual, yet, by the wide sweep of a "whosoever will," makes it as pointed a message to all and to any, as if the proprietor of each Bible had received it under cover with the inscrip-

argument, as we have already brought it forward in the 15th Sermon of our Commercial Discourses—at p. 374, Vol. VI. of the Series.

tion of his name and surname from the upper sanctuary—that God should thus pledge Himself to the offer of a free pardon through the blood of Jesus, and profess His readiness to pour out His Spirit upon all who turn to Him that they may live—for Him to have brought Himself so near in the way of entreaty; and to have committed, in the face of many high and heavenly witnesses who are looking on, to have committed His truth to the position, that none who venture themselves on the revealed propitiation of the gospel, and submit to the guiddance of Him who is the author of it, shall fail of an entrance into life everlasting—Thus to have placed a blissful eternity within the step of creatures so utterly polluted and undone, is indeed a wondrous approximation. But O how tremendously will it turn the reckoning against us, should it be found that though God thus willed our salvation, yet we would not; and refusing to walk in the way which He with such a mighty cost of expiation had prepared for us, cleaved in preference to the dust of a world that is soon to pass away; and, living as we list, kept by our guilty indifference to offers so full of tenderness, to prospects of glory so bright and so alluring.

But let us hope better things of you and things that accompany salvation though we thus speak. Let us call upon you to follow in the train of those Old Testament worthies, who, though few in number, so redeemed the loss incurred by the general perverseness of their countrymen, as to make it on the whole for the advantage of their nation that to them were committed the oracles of God. Be followers

of them who through faith and patience are now inheriting those promises, which, when in the flesh, they saw afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. Declare plainly by your life that you seek another country; that you have no desire for a world where all is changing and breaking up around you—where sin is the native element, and death walking in its train rifles the places of our dearest remembrance, of all those sweets of friendship and society which wont to gladden them. Let the sad memorial of this world's frailty, and the cheering revelations of another, shut you up unto the faith—Let them so place the alternative between time and eternity before you, as to resolve for you which of them is far better. And with such a remedy for guilt as the blood of an all-prevailing atonement, defer no longer the work of reconciliation with the God whom you have offended; and receive not His grace in vain; and turn to the study and perusal of those oracles which He hath granted to enlighten you—knowing that they are indeed able to make you wise unto salvation, through the faith that is in Christ Jesus.

LECTURE IX.

ROMANS, iii, 1—9.

"What advantage then hath the Jew? or what profit is there of circumcision? Much every way: chiefly, because that unto them were committed the oracles of God. For what if some did not believe? shall their unbelief make the faith of God without effect? God forbid: yea, let God be true, but every man a liar; as it is written, That thou mightest be justified in thy sayings, and mightest overcome when thou art judged. But if our unrighteousness commend the righteousness of God, what shall we say? Is God unrighteous who taketh vengeance? (I speak as a man) God forbid: for then how shall God judge the world? For if the truth of God hath more abounded through my lie unto his glory; why yet am I also judged as a sinner? and not rather, (as we be slanderously reported, and as some affirm that we say,) Let us do evil, that good may come? whose damnation is just. What then? are we better than they? No, in no wise: for we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin."

You will recollect that by the argument of the foregoing chapter, our apostle, after having demonstrated the universality of Gentile guilt in the sight of God, attempts the same demonstration in reference to the Jews. He proves, that, with the possession of all that which distinguished them outwardly from other nations, they might fully participate in that condemnation to which sin has rendered us all liable: and even affirms as much as may lead us to understand, that the privileges which belonged to them, when neglected and abused, were in fact so many circumstances of aggravation. It was very natural, that, at this point of his argument, he should conceive an objection that might

arise against it; and, speaking, in the person of an adversary, he proposes this objection in the form of a question from him. This question he answers in his own name. And the remonstrance of his imaginary opponent, together with his own reply to it, occupy the first and second verses of the chapter upon which we have entered. Look upon these two verses as the first step and commencement of a dialogue, that is prosecuted onwards to the 9th verse; and you have, in what we have now read, a kind of dramatic interchange of argument, going on between Paul and a hostile reasoner, whom he himself, by an act of imagination, has brought before him. This is a style of argumentation that is quite familiar in controversy. The preacher will sometimes deal with an objection, just in the very terms he would have done, if it were cast in living conversation against him, by one standing before his pulpit; and the writer, when he anticipates a resistance of the same kind to his reasoning will just step forward to encounter it, as he would have done, if an entrance were actually made against him on the lists of authorship. This is the way in which the apostle appears to be engaged in the verses before us; and if you conceive them made up of objections put by an antagonist, and replies to those questions by himself, it will help to clear your understanding of the passage now under our consideration.

You have already heard at length all the elucidation which we mean to offer, on the first question and part of the first answer of this dialogue. After the Jew had been so much assimilated in guilt to

the Gentile, as he had been by the apostle in the last chapter, the objection suggests itself, Where then is the advantage of having been a Jew? Where is the mighty blessedness which was spoken of by God to the patriarchs, as that which was to signalize their race above all the other descendants of all other families? The reply given to this in the second verse is, that the chief advantage lay in their having committed to them the oracles of God. You will recollect the inference that we drew from this answer of the apostle—even, that though the Scriptures laid a heavier responsibility upon those who had them, than upon those who had them not; and though, in virtue of this, the many among the ancient Hebrews were rendered more criminal than they else would have been, and were therefore sunk on that account more deeply into an abyss of condemnation; and though they were only the few who by faith in these Scriptures attained to the heights of celestial blessedness and glory—yet there must have been a clear preponderance of the good that was rendered over the evil that was incurred, seeing it to be affirmed by the inspired author of this argument that there was a clear advantage upon the whole. We will not repeat the applications which we have already made of this apostolic statement, to the object of vindicating a missionary enterprise, by sending the light and education of Christianity abroad—or vindicating the efforts of diffusing more extensively than heretofore the same education at home. But be assured, that it were just as wrong to abstain from doing this which is in itself good, lest evil should

come—as it were to do that which is in itself evil, that good may come. Nor, however powerfully they may have operated in retarding the best of causes, is there any thing in the objections to which we there adverted, that ought to keep back our direct and immediate entrance upon the bidden field of "Go and teach all nations"—"Go and preach the Gospel to every creature under heaven."

The apostle we conceive to be still speaking in his own person, throughout the third and fourth verses. It is to be remarked that 'some' in the original signifies a part of the whole, but not necessarily a small part of it. It may be a very great part and majority of the whole—as in that passage of the book of Hebrews, where it is said "some when they had heard did provoke: howbeit not all that came out of Egypt by Moses." The truth is, that, as far as we historically know of it, all did provoke God upon that occasion, save Joshua and Caleb, and those younger of the people who were still incapable of bearing arms. And in Timothy we read that "some shall depart from the faith"—though the apostle is there speaking of that overwhelming apostacy of the middle ages, which left so faint and feeble a remainder of light to Christendom for many centuries. And, in like manner, were they the greater number of the Jews, who were only so in the letter, and in the outward circumcision; and were not so in spirit, or in the circumcision of the heart. They were greatly the more considerable part who did not believe; and yet, in the face of this heavy deduction from the good actually rendered to the Jews, could the

apostle still stand up in the vindication of those promises which God held forth to their ancestors; of a blessing upon those who should come after them—letting us know, that, though they were the many who aggravated their own condemnation, and the few who by inheriting the privileges inherited a blessing, yet the truth of God here called the faith of God, was not unfulfilled—that whatever comes in the shape of promise or of prophecy from Him, will have its verification—that whatever be the deceitfulness of man, God will still retain the attribute given to Him by the apostle elsewhere, even that He cannot lie. So that, should it be questioned whether the family of Israel, in consequence of God's dealing with them, had an advantage over all the other families, it will be found in the holy and faithful men of the old dispensation, few as they were; and it will be found on the great day of manifestation, when all the reverses of Jewish history from the first calling forth of Abraham to their last glorious restoration shall have been accomplished—that He will be justified in every utterance He made respecting them, and that He will overcome when He is judged of it.

'God forbid' is in the original simply 'Let it not be.'

In the fifth verse the apostle again brings forward his objector, and puts into his mouth an argument. It is our unrighteousness, says he, which hath made room for God's righteousness in its place, which sets it off as it were, and renders it so worthy of acceptation; and, if this be the case, might it not be said that it is not righteous in God to

inflict wrath for that which hath redounded so much to the credit and the manifestation of His own attributes? This objection is brought forward in another form in the 7th verse. 'If God's truth have been rendered more illustrious by my lie, or by my sin, and so He has been the more glorified in consequence—why does He find fault with me, and punish me for sins which advance eventually His honour? Should not we rather sin that God's righteousness may be exalted, and do the instrumental evil that the ultimate good may come out of it? The apostle gives two distinct answers to these questions, after giving us a passing intimation in the 5th verse, that he is not speaking in his own person as an apostle when he brings forward these objections, but only speaking as a man whom he supposes to set himself against the whole of his argument; and tells us also in the 7th verse that the maxim of doing evil that good may come, which he here supposes to be pled by an unbelieving Jew, was also charged, but slanderously charged, upon Christians. The way in which he sets aside the objection in the 5th verse is, that, if admitted, God would be deprived of His power of judging the world—and the objection in the 7th and 8th verses is set aside by the simple affirmation, that if there be any who would do evil that good may come, their condemnation is just.

Before urging these lessons any further, let us offer a paraphrase of these verses.

'What is the advantage then possessed by the Jew, it will be said, or what benefit is it to him that he is of the circumcision? We answer that

the benefit is great many ways—and chiefly that to that people have been committed the revealed scriptures of God. And even though the greater part did not believe, yet still their unbelief puts no disparagement on the veracity of God. Though all men were liars, this would detract nothing from the glory of God's truth; and, however this objection may be pushed, it will be found in the language of the Psalmist that God will be justified in all His sayings and will overcome when He is judged. But to this it may further be said, if God do not suffer in His glory by our guilt—nay if, out of the materials of human sinfulness, He can rear a ministration by which He and all His attributes may be exalted—why should He deal in anger against those, whom He can thus turn into the instruments of His honour? The unrighteousness of man sets off the righteousness of God; and He gets glory to Himself by our doings; and is it therefore a righteous thing in Him to inflict vengeance on account of them? Such is the sophistry of vice, but it cannot be admitted—else the judgment of God over the world is at an end. And it is further said by those who, in the language of a former chapter, have turned God's truth into a lie—that that hath made God's truth to abound the more unto His own glory—that He has so dealt with them as to bring a larger accession of glory to Himself; and where then is the evil of that which finally serves to illustrate and make brighter than before His character? Should I be condemned a sinner, for having done that which glorifies God?—might not I do the instrumental evil, for the sake of the

eventual good? Such is the morality that has been charged upon us—but falsely so charged—for it is a morality which ought to be reprobated.'

In this passage the apostle touches, though but slightly and transiently, on a style of scepticism to which he afterwards adverts at greater length in the 9th chapter of this epistle; and we, in like manner, shall defer the great bulk of our observations about it, till we have arrived at the things hard to be understood which are found therein. But let us also follow the apostle, in that fainter and more temporary notice which he takes of these things on the present occasion—when before completing his proof that both Jews and Gentiles were under sin, he both affirms that God was glorified upon the former in spite of their unrighteousness; and yet deals with that unrighteousness as if it was an offence to Him—that even out of their disobedience an actual honour accrues to Himself; and yet that the vengeance of His wrath is due to that disobedience—that, let the worthlessness of man be what it may, the vindication and the victory will be God's; and yet upon this very element of worthlessness, which serves to illustrate the glories of His character, will He lay the burden of a righteous indignation. There was something in the subtlety of the Jewish doctors of that age, which stood nearly allied with the infidel metaphysics of the present; and which would attempt to darken and to overthrow all moral distinctions, and to dethrone God from that eminence, which, as the Moral Governor of the world, belongs to Him. And it is well that the apostle gives us a

specimen of his treatment of this sophistry, that, when exposed to it ourselves, we may know what is the scriptural way of meeting it, and what are the scriptural grounds on which its influence may be warded away from us.

The truth is, that, in the days of the apostle as well as in our own days, speculative difficulties were made use of to darken and confound the clearest moral principles; and, then as well as now, did the imaginations of men travel into a region that was beyond them, whence they fetched conceits and suppositions of their own framing, for the purpose of extinguishing the light that was near and round about them. And some there were who took refuge from the conviction of sin, in the mazes of a sophistry, by which they tried to perplex both themselves and others out of the plainest intimations of conscience and common sense. There is no man of a fair and honest understanding, who, if not carried beyond his depth by the subtleties of a science falsely so called, does not yield his immediate consent, and with all the readiness he would to a first principle, to the position that God is the rightful judge of His own creatures; and that it is altogether for Him to place the authority of a law over them, and to punish their violations; and that it is an unrighteous thing in us to set our will in opposition to His will, and a righteous thing in Him to avenge Himself of this disobedience. These are what any plain man will readily take up with, as being among the certainties of the Divine Government; and not till he bewilders himself by attempting to explain the secrecies of

the Divine Government, will the impression of these certainties be at all deafened or effaced from the feelings of his moral nature. Now what the apostle appears to be employed about in this passage, is just to defend our moral nature against an invasion upon the authority of its clearest and most powerful suggestions. The antagonists against whom he here sets himself, feel themselves pursued by his allegations of their guilt; and try to make their escape from a reproachful sense of their own sinfulness; and, for this purpose, would they ambitiously lift up the endeavours of their understanding towards the more high and unsearchable counsels of God. It is very true, that, however sinfully men may conduct themselves, He will get a glory to His own attributes from all His dealings with them. It is very true, that, like as the wrath of man shall be made to praise Him, so shall the worthlessness of man be made to redound to the honour of God's truth and of God's righteousness. Should even all men be liars, the veracity of God will be the more illustrated by its contrast with this surrounding evil, and by the fulfilment upon it of all His denunciations. The holiness of the Divinity will blazen forth as it were into brighter conspicuousness, on the dark ground of human guilt and human turpitude. God manifests the dignity of His character, in His manifested abhorrence against all unrighteousness and ungodliness of men. In the last day the glory of His power will be made known, when the Judge cometh in flaming fire to take vengeance on those who disobey Him; and even the very retribution which He

deals forth on the heads of the rebellious, will be to Him the trophies of an awful and lofty vindication.

Now the objection reiterated in the various questions of this passage is, that if out of the unrighteousness of man, such a revenue as it were of fame and character shall accrue to the Deity—why should He be offended? Why should He inflict so much severity on the sin, which after all serves to illustrate His own sacredness, and to exalt His own majesty? Why should He lay such a weight of guilt on those, who, it would appear, are to be the instruments of His glory? Is not sin, if not a good thing in itself, at least a good thing in its consequences, when it thus serves to swell the pomp of the Eternal, and throw a brighter radiance around His ways? And might not we then do this evil thing that the final and the resulting good may emerge out of it? And might not that sin, which we have been taught to shun as dishonouring to God, be therefore chosen on the very opposite principle, of doing that which will ultimately bring a reversion of honour to His character, and of credit and triumph to all His administrations?

One would have thought, that the obvious answer to all this sophistry, was, that if you take away from God the prerogative of judging and condemning and inflicting vengeance, you take away from Him all the ultimate glory which He ever can derive, from the sinfulness of His own creatures—that the very way in which the presence of sin sets forth the sacredness of the Deity, is by the abhorrence that He manifests towards it—that the righteousness of man commendeth the righteousness of

God, only by God dealing with this unrighteousness, in the capacity of a judge and of a lawgiver —that if you strip Him of the power of punishment, you strip Him of the power of rendering such a vindication of His attributes, as will make Him venerable and holy in the eyes of His own subjects —that, in fact, there remains no possibility of God fetching any triumph to Himself, from the rebelliousness of His creatures, if He cannot proceed in the work of moral government against their rebellion. And thus, if God may not find fault, and if His judicial administration of the world is to be overthrown, there will none of that glory come to Him out of human sinfulness, which the gainsayer of our text pleads in mitigation of human sinfulness.

This Paul might have said. But it is instructive to perceive, that, instead of this, he satisfies himself with simply affirming the first principles of the question. He counts it enough barely to state, that if there was anything in the reasoning of his opponent, then God's right of judging the world would be taken away. He holds this to be a full condemnation of the whole sophistry, that, if it were admitted, how then could God judge the world? With the announcement of what is plain to a man of plain understanding, does he silence an argument which can only proceed from a man of subtle understanding. And in reply to the maxim, 'let us do evil that good may come,' he enters into no depths of jurisprudence or moral argumentation upon the subject; but simply affirms that the condemnation of all who should do so were a righteous condemnation.

It is not for us to enter on the philosophy of any subject, upon which Paul does not enter. But we may at least remark, that this treatment of his adversaries by the apostle is consonant with the soundest maxims of philosophy. We know not a better way of characterizing the spirit of that sound and humble and sober philosophy, which has conducted the human mind to its best acquisitions on the field of natural truth, than simply to say of it, that it ever prefers the certainty of experience, to the visions of a conjectural imagination—that it cautiously keeps within the line which separates the known from the unknown, and would never suffer a suspicion fetched from the latter region, to militate against a plain certainty that stands clearly and obviously before it on the former region. And when it carries its attention from natural to moral science, it never will consent to a principle of sure and authoritative guidance for the heart and conduct of man in the present time, to be subverted by any difficulty drawn from a theme so inaccessible as the unrevealed purposes of God, or from a field of contemplation so remote, as the glories which are eventually to redound to the character of God at the final winding up of His administration.

It is not for man to hold at abeyance the prompt decisions of the moral sense, till he make out an adjustment between them and such endless fancies as may be conjured up from the gulphs of misty and metaphysical speculation. Both piety and philosophy lend their concurrence to the truth, that secret things belong to God, and revealed things only belong to us and to our children. He has

written, not merely on the book of His revealed testimony, but He has written on the book of our own consciences the lesson, that He is rightfully the governor of the world, and that we are rightfully the subjects of that government. There is a monitor within, who, with a still and a small but nevertheless a powerful voice, tells that if we disobey Him we do wrong. There is a voice of the heart which awards to Him the place of sovereign, and to us the place of servants. If He ought not to judge, and may not impose the penalties of disobedience, this relationship is altogether dissolved. And it is too much for man to fetch, either from the aerial region that is above him, or from the dark and hidden futurity that is before him, a principle which would lay prostrate the authority of conscience, and infuse the baleful elements of darkness and distrust into its clearest intimations.

LECTURE X.

ROMANS, iii, 9—19.

"What then? are we better than they? No, in no wise: for we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin; as it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: there is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one. Their throat is an open sepulchre: with their tongues they have used deceit: the poison of asps is under their lips: whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness: their feet are swift to shed blood: destruction and misery are in their ways; and the way of peace have they not known: there is no fear of God before their eyes. Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law; that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God."

VER. 9. 'Better,' in respect of having a righteousness before God. We have before charged Jews and Gentiles with being under sin. We affirmed it to their own conscience. We now prove it to the Jews from their own revelation. The following is the paraphrase of this passage.

'What then! are we Jews better than those Gentiles in respect of our justification by our own obedience? Not at all—for we before charged both Jews and Gentiles with being under sin. And we prove it from God's written revelation, where it is affirmed that there is none who has a righteousness that He will accept—not even one. There is none who is thus satisfied with himself, and feels no need of such a justification as we propose, that really understandeth, or truly seeketh

after God. They are all gone out of the way and have become unprofitable, and there is none of them that doeth what is substantially and religiously good—no, not one. From their mouths there proceedeth every abomination; and they speak deceitfully with their tongues; and the poison of malignity distils from their lips; and their mouth is full of imprecation upon others, and of bitterness against them. And they not only speak mischief, but they do it; for they eagerly run to the shedding of blood; and their way may be tracked, as it were, by the destruction and the wretchedness which mark the progress of it; and they know not and love not the way of peace; and, as to the fear of God, He is not looked to or regarded by them. Now all this is charged upon men by the book of the Jewish law. We are only repeating quotations out of their own Scriptures; and as what the law saith is intended for those who are under the law, and not for those who are strangers to it and beyond the reach of its announcements—all these sayings must be applied to Jews; and they prove that it is not the mere possession of a law, but the keeping of it which secures the justification of those over whom it has authority. Their mouths, therefore, must also be stopped; and the whole world, consisting of Jews and Gentiles, must all be brought in as guilty before God.'

We here remark, in the first place, that Paul had already, in the second chapter, affirmed the guilt of the Jews, and condescended upon the instances of it. He can scarcely be said to have proved their guilt; he had only charged them

with it; and yet through the conscience of those whom we address, it is very possible that a charge may no sooner be uttered, than a conviction on the part of those against whom we are directing the charge, may come immediately on the back of it. There is often a power in a bare statement, which is not at all bettered but rather impaired by the accompaniment of reasoning. If what you say of a man agree with his own bosom experience that it is really so, there is a weight in your simple affirmation which needs not the enforcing of any argument. It is this which gives such authority to those sermons even still, that recommend themselves to the conscience; and it was this, in fact, which gained more credit and acceptance for the apostles than did all their miracles. They revealed to men the secrets of their own hearts; and what the inspired teacher said they were, they felt themselves to be; and nothing brings so ready and entire an homage to the truth that is spoken, as the agreement of its simple assertions with the finding of a man's own conscience. This manifestation of the truth unto the conscience, which was the grand instrument of discipleship in the first ages of the church, is the grand instrument still; and it is thus that an unlearned hearer, who just knows his own mind, may be touched as effectually to his conviction, by the accordancy between what a preacher says, and what he himself feels, as the most profound and philosophical member of an accomplished congregation. And thus that obstinacy of unbelief, which we vainly attempt to carry by the power of any elaborate or metaphysical demonstration, may give

way, both with the untaught and the cultivated, to the bare statement of the preacher—when he simply avers the selfishness of the human heart; and its pride, and its sensuality, and above all its ungodliness.

But Paul is not satisfied with this alone. He refers the Jews to their own Scriptures. He deals out quotations, chiefly taken from the book of Psalms; and, in so doing, he avails himself of what both he and the other apostles felt to be a peculiarly fit and proper instrument of conviction, in their various reasonings with the children of Israel. You meet with this style of argumentation on many distinct occasions, and often ushered in with the phrase "as it is written." It was thus that Christ expounded to his disciples what was written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning Him; and that these disciples again went forth upon the Jews, armed for their intellectual warfare out of the Old Testament. In almost every interview they had with the Hebrews, you will meet with this as a peculiarity which is not to be observed, when epistles are addressed, or conversations are held, with Gentiles only. Thus Stephen gave a long demonstration to his persecutors out of the Jewish history; and Peter rested his argument for Jesus Christ, on the interpretation that he gave of one of the prophetic psalms; and Paul, in his sermon at Antioch, went back to the story of Egyptian bondage and carried his explanation downwards through David and his family, to the doctrine of the remission of sins by the Saviour, who sprang from him; and, in the Jewish

synagogue at Thessalonica, did he reason with them three sabbath days out of the Scriptures; and before the judgment-seat of Felix, did he aver, that his belief in Jesus of Nazareth, was that of one who believed all the things that are written in the law and in the prophets; and in argumenting the cause of Christianity before Agrippa, did he rest his vindication on what Agrippa knew of the promises that were found in the Old Testament; and when he met his countrymen at Rome, it was his employment, from morning to evening, to persuade them concerning Jesus both out of the law of Moses and out of the prophets. He who was all things to all men, was a Jew among the Jews. He reasoned with them on their own principles, and no where more frequently than in this Epistle to the Romans—where, though he had previously spoken of their sinfulness to their own conscience, he yet adds a number of deponing testimonies to the same effect from their own book of revelation.

It is this agreement between the Bible and a man's own conscience, which stamps upon the book of God one of its most satisfying evidences. It is this perhaps more than any thing else which draws the interest and the notice of men towards it. For after all, there is no way of fixing the attention of man so powerfully as by holding up to him a mirror of himself; and no wisdom which he more prizes, or to which he bows more profoundly, than that which by its piercing and intelligent glance, can open to him the secrecies of his own heart, and force him to recognize a marvellous accordancy between its positions, and all the varieties of his own intimate and home-felt experience.

The question then before us is—Does the passage now read bear such an accordancy with the real character of man, as that which we are now alluding to? It abounds in affirmations of sweeping universality, and a test of their truth or of their falsehood is to be found in every heart. The apostle has here made a most adventurous commitment of himself—for, however much he may have asserted about matters that lay beyond the limits of human experience without the hazard of being confronted, the matters which he has here touched upon all lie within the familiar and well-known chambers of a man's own consciousness. And the positive announcements that he has made are not of some but of all individuals—so that could a single specimen be discovered of a natural man, who was righteous, and who had the fear of God before his eyes, and who either understood or sought after Him, and who was free of all malignity and cruelty and censoriousness—then would this be a refutation in fact of what the apostle assumes and pronounces in argument; and though it requires a minute and multiform and unexcepted agreement between the book of revelation and the book of experience, to make out an evidence in behalf of the former—yet would one single case of disagreement be enough to overthrow all its pretensions, and to depose the apostles and evangelists of Christianity, from all the credit which they have ever held in the estimation of the world.

You know that the apostle's aim in the whole of this argument, is to secure the reception of his own doctrine; and that, for this purpose, he is ad-

dressing himself to those who need to be convinced, and are therefore not yet convinced of it. They who have actually submitted themselves to the truth which he is urging, and have come under its influence, have arrived at the very understanding of God which he is labouring to establish. These are in the way to which he is attempting to recall the whole human race, and must therefore be excepted from the charge of being now out of the way. There are many such under the new dispensation; and there were also some such under the old who must also be regarded as being on the side of the apostle, but of whom the apostle affirms, that ere they came over to that side, as he does of every one else, that they realized on their own persons, the sad picture which he draws in this place of human degradation. The truth is that there were men even of the Old Testament age, who were within the pale of the gospel; and of whom, in consequence, it cannot be affirmed that they exemplified the description which is here set before us. But though, from the nature of the case, such a withdrawment must be conceded in behalf of those who are under the gospel, we are prepared to assert that the inspired writer has not overcharged the account that he has given of the depravity of those who are under law—whether it be the law of conscience, or of Moses, or even of the purer morality of Christ—Insomuch that all who refuse the mysteries of His grace, are universally in the wrong: And if they who are believers, still a very little flock, are regarded as constituting the church; and they who are not believers, still a vast and overbearing ma-

jority, are regarded as constituting the world—then is it true, that, from one end to the other of it, it lieth in wickedness, and that all the world is guilty before God.

Be assured then, that there is a delusion, in all the complacency that you associate with your own righteousness. It is the want of a godly principle which essentially vitiates the whole: And additional to this, with all the generosities and all the equities which have done so much for your reputation among men, there is a selfishness that lurks in your bosom; or a vanity that swells and inflames it; or a preference of your own object to that of others, which may lead you to acts or words of unfeeling severity; or a regard for some particular gratification, coupled with a regardlessness for every interest which lieth in its way—that may render you, in the estimation of Him who pondereth the heart, as remote a wanderer from rectitude as he on the path of whose visible history there occurred in other times the atrocities of savage cruelty and savage violence. It were barbarous to tell you so—had we no remedy to offer for that moral disease which so taints, and without exception too, all the families of our species. Life has much to vex and to trouble it; and the heart is sadly plied with the visitations of sorrow; and its very sensibilities, which open up for it the avenues of enjoyment, expose it ere long to the heavier distress; and the friends who in other years gladdened the walk of our daily history, have left us unsupported and alone in the midst of a toilsome pilgrimage. And it were really cruel to add to the pressure of a

creature so beset and borne in upon, by telling him of his worthlessness—did we not stand before him charged with the tidings of his possible renovation to the high prospects of a virtuous and holy immortality. Let him therefore cast the burden of his despondency away; and, if there be a novelty in the views that have been offered of his present condition, let it but allure him to further enquiry; and if any conviction have mingled with the exercise, let him betake himself to the great fountain-head of inspiration; and if he have found no rest in all his former unceasing attempts after happiness, let him try the new enterprise of becoming wise unto salvation. Should this Bible be his guide; and prayer his habitual employment; and the great sacrifice, with the intimation which Paul followed up his humiliating exposure of the wickedness of man, be his firm dependence—with these new elements of thought, and this new region of anticipation before him, he will reach a peace that the world knoweth not; and he will attain in Christ a comfort that he never yet has gotten in any quarter of contemplation to which he has turned himself; and this kind Saviour, touched with a fellow-feeling for his sorrows, both knows and is willing to succour him, so as to replace even in this world all the desolations that he now mourns over, and at length to bear him in triumph to that unfading country where there is no sorrow and no separation.[1]

[1] Our more copious illustration of this passage, is to be found in the 15th of the 'Commercial Discourses' already referred to; and which, therefore, we have not repeated in this place.

LECTURE XI.

ROMANS, iii, 20—26.

"Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin. But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets; even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Christ Jesus unto all and upon all them that believe;—for there is no difference; for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;—being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; to declare, I say, at this time his righteousness; that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus."

THERE is perhaps no single passage in the book of inspiration, which reveals in a way so formal and authoritative as the one before us, the path of transition by which a sinner passes from a state of wrath to a state of acceptance. There is no passage, to which if we would only bring the docility and the compliance of childhood, that is more fitted to guide and to turn an enquiring sinner into the way of peace. Let the light which makes apparent to the soul, only shine upon these verses; and there is laid before the man who questions what it is that he must do to be saved, the great link of communication on which he may be led along from the ground of fearful exposure that nature occupies, to the ground of a secure and lasting reconciliation. Let him lay aside his own wisdom, and submit himself to the word of the

testimony that is here presented to his notice; and, taught in the true wisdom of God, he will indeed become wise unto salvation. It is an overture of God's own making, and directly applicable to the question of dispute, that there is between Him and the men who have offended Him. It is His own setting forth of the way in which He would have the difference to be adjusted—nor can we conceive how defenceless creatures, standing on the brink of an eternity for which they have no provision, and which nevertheless all of them must enter and abide upon for ever, ought to have their attention more arrested and their feelings more engrossed and solemnized, than by the communication of the apostle in this verse, and by the unfoldings of that embassy of peace that is here so simply and so truly set before us.

The apostle has by this time well nigh finished his demonstration of human sinfulness; and he makes use of such terms as go to fasten the charge of guilt, not in that way of vague and inapplicable generality, from which it is so easy for each man to escape the sense of his own personal danger, and the remorse of his own individual conscience; but as go to fasten the charge on every single member or descendant of the great human family. There is a method of blunting the edge of conviction, by interpreting, in a kind of corporate and collective way, all that is said by the apostle about the sinfulness of Jews on the one hand and of Gentiles on the other. But let each of us only review his past life, or enter with the light of self-examination into the chambers of his own heart; and he will feel

himself to be addressed by the phrase of "whosoever thou art, O man;" and he will feel that in the clause of "every mouth being stopped," his own mouth should be stopped also; and he will consent that he, a native of our world, has a part in the apostle's asseveration about all the world being guilty before God; and he will readily accord with the Bible in that, whereas he is a partaker of flesh and blood, he offers no exception to the averment, that, in the sight of God and by the deeds of the law, no flesh shall be justified.

It is through want of faith that we are blind to the reality of the gospel; and it is also through want of faith that we are blind to the reality of the law. The generality of readers see not any significancy in the apostle's words, because they feel not any sense of the things that are expressed by it. They are just as dead to the terrors of the law, as they are to the offers and invitations of the gospel. The sense of God pursuing them with the exactions of an authority that He will not let down, is just as much away from their feelings, as the sense of God in Christ beseeching them to flee for refuge to the hope set before them. The man who is surrounded by an opake partition, which limits his view to the matters that lie within the region of carnality, and hides from him alike the place of condemnation and the place of deliverance that lie beyond it—he may enjoy a peace that is without disturbance, because, though he have no positive hope from the gospel, he has no positive apprehension from the law. He is alike insensible to both; and not till, through an opening in that screen,

which hides from nature the dread and important certainties that are lying in reserve for all her children, he is made to perceive that God's truth and righteousness are out against him—will he appreciate the revelation of that great mystery, by which it is made known how truth and mercy have met together, and how righteousness and peace have kissed each other.

Let us now proceed to the exposition of this passage.

Mark in the 20th verse how this question is treated as one between God and man. It is not that one man may not be justified in the sight of another—may not have fulfilled all that the other has a right to expect; but the question is about justification in the sight of God. It is a judicial proceeding before God.

Ver. 21. A 'righteousness without the law,' is simply a righteousness which we obtain without having fulfilled that law in our own persons. Paul never loses the advantage of any testimony that is given to the doctrine of Christ out of the Jewish Scriptures; and while he therefore raises against himself the opposition of the great majority of his countrymen, by asserting a righteousness that was arrived at in some other way than through the path of obedience to their law, yet he does not omit the opportunity of trying to disarm this opposition, by avouching that this very righteousness was borne witness to by the law and the prophets. The testimonies of the prophets are various and abundant on this topic. For a view of the testimonies of the law, we refer you to Paul's Epistle to the Hebrews.

Ver. 22. The righteousness which is proposed by the apostle, as that which alone is valid to the object of justification, is called by him the righteousness of God. It is that the acceptance of which does not dishonour Him. It is that which He Himself has provided, and which He bestows as a grant to all who will. We cannot speak too plainly about an alternative, on which there hinges the whole eternity of a sinner. Conceive the sinner to draw nigh, in the imagination of his own merits —God says to him, 'I cannot receive you upon this footing; but here is a righteousness which I hold out to you, wrought not by yourself but by my Son, and I now ask your consent that you be clothed upon therewith. Come to me, consenting to be so clothed upon, and I take you into full reconciliation.'—'Unto all.' The offer of this righteousness is unto all; and the righteousness itself is upon all who believe. Their belief constitutes their acceptance of the thing offered; and what was formerly theirs in offer, becomes by their faith theirs in possession. 'No difference.' There is no difference between Jew and Gentile, in respect of all having sinned; and there is as little difference in respect of the way in which all may be justified.

Ver. 23. Come short of glorifying God—'When they knew God they glorified him not as God;' and they are alike short of having wherewith to glory of before God. Even Abraham had nothing to glory of before God; and of consequence no claim or title to be glorified by God.

Ver. 24. You understand that the term justify signifies, not to make a man righteous in personal

character, but to hold and declare him righteous in point of law. We have already explained that it is to be understood forensically. We here understand that this justification is not wrought for, but given, and given freely. It is not a purchase, but a present. It is given by grace, which is just saying, that it is given gratis. When we say that it is not a purchase, we mean that it is not purchased by ourselves. Still however it was purchased, but by another. To redeem is to recover what is lost, but by rendering an adequate price for it. We had lost righteousness in the sight of God. Jesus Christ redeemed the righteousness that we had lost. He gave the price for it; and we are freely offered of that thing which is the fruit of His purchase.

Ver. 25. 'Set forth.' Exhibited. This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased. Set forth before the eyes. The term propitiation is the same with what in the Old Testament is translated mercy-seat. On the great day of atonement it was sprinkled with the blood of an appointed sacrifice. "And there I will meet thee," says God to Moses, "and will commune with thee from above the mercyseat." It rather, however, signifies the offering itself, than the place in which the blood of the offering was sprinkled. You know what it is to make the Being whom you have offended propitious. The propitiation is the offering by which propitiousness is obtained. Jesus Christ in dying, rendered a propitiation for the sins of the world. And you in particular have the benefit of this propitiation; He becomes your propitiation upon your having faith in His blood. There is a general faith which res-

pects the whole testimony of God, that, if true and not counterfeit, will also respect all the particulars of that testimony. Still however there is a danger in connecting our reconciliation with this general faith; for there may be a delusive vagueness, you will observe, in the matter, and the attention may fail to be exercised on that distinct truth with which reconciliation has most expressly and immediately to do. Let it be well remarked then, that in this verse propitiation is said to be through faith in His blood. There is an appropriateness of this kind kept up in God's dealings with us. Through faith in the blood of Christ, we obtain that redemption which is through this blood, even the forgiveness of sin. It is through faith in God's promise of the Holy Spirit that we shall upon asking Him receive the Holy Spirit. This latter act of faith brings down upon us the benefit of which it is the object, even the Spirit—as the former act of faith brings down upon us the benefit of which it is the object, even the washing away of our guilt in the blood of the Lamb. As is the faith, so is the fulfilment. Our Saviour did not ask the blind men—Believe ye that I am able to do all things?—but Believe ye that I am able to do this thing? And upon their replying—Yes, He touched their eyes and said, According to your faith so be it done unto you—and their eyes were opened. The man who has the faith that he will get the spirit of charity, and prays accordingly—though he should get forgiveness on the back of his prayer, is not getting according to that faith. The man who has the faith that Christ's Spirit can sanctify him, and prays for

it—though he should get forgiveness on the back of his prayer, is not getting according to that faith. But the man who has the faith that the blood of Christ can wash away guilt, and prays that in this blood his guilt may be washed away, and on the back of his prayer is accepted in the Beloved and for His sake—he is getting precisely according to his faith. And thus it is that there is an accordancy between the benefits of faith, and the particular truths of revelation which faith has respect unto—when it brings down these benefits upon the believer. Faith has been compared by some theologians to the bunch of hyssop, and the blood of Christ is called the blood of sprinkling.

'For' as to the remission of sins that are past. To declare His righteousness, in the having remitted by His forbearance, the sins of the ages that are past.

Ver. 26. It is at this time that God hath set Him forth. He now shows what was before hidden from the prophets. In the fulness of time Christ is now manifested. It was a mystery in former ages, how a holy God could pardon. This is now declared; and it is now made manifest that God might be just, while He justifies those who believe in Jesus.

The following is the paraphrase of this passage.

'Therefore no individual shall work out a righteousness that justifies him by his doing of the law —for the law makes his sin manifest. But now, in lack of this righteousness of man, there is manifested a righteousness of God—not consisting of our obedience to the law, though both the law and the prophets bear witness to it. This is that righteousness of God, which is received by our faith in

Christ Jesus, which is offered unto all, and actually conferred on all without distinction who believe. For all have sinned and come short of rendering glory to God; and none are therefore justified in the way of reward, but receive justification as a gift of kindness, out of that which has been purchased for us by Christ Jesus—whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in His blood; and this to declare the righteousness of God, in His having forborne to punish the sins of those who were forgiven in former ages of the world —to declare this righteousness to us now, and so make it manifest, that it was not merely a kind and a compassionate, but also a just thing in God, to justify him who believeth in Jesus.'

The first lesson that we should like to urge upon you from this passage, is the gospel doctrine of our acceptance with God, in all the strict entireness and purity of its terms. There is nothing which so much darkens the mind of an enquirer, and throws such a cloudiness over the simple announcements that God has made to us, as the tendency of a legal spirit, to mix up the doings of the creature with the free grace and mercy of the Creator. Take up with it as an absolute truth, that the law has condemned you. Be very sure that this is the sentence which is in force, against even the most virtuous and upright of the species. Do not try to mitigate the evils of your condition, or to blunt the edge and application of the law, as having pronounced a destroying sentence upon your person—by alleging any extenuation of your offences, or any number of actual conformities. You

have broken the law in one point, have you not? So only has the assassin done, in respect to the law of his country. His execution is the legal consequence of his guilt; and thus too it is that your guilt is carried out to its legal consequence. It will be better therefore for you that you regard yourself, as under the law to be wholly undone. If you do not you will keep out from your mind the whole clearness and comfort of the gospel. If you admit any merit, or any innocence of your own, among the ingredients of your security before God —then all is thrown back again upon a questionable and precarious and uncertain foundation. The controversy between God and man is wakened up anew, by such a proceeding. You are again consigned, as before, among the old elements of doubt and distrust; and the question, what degree of comparative innocence is enough to admit your own righteousness into the plea of justification before God, will, by its ambiguous and unresolvable nature, remove you as far from any solid ground of dependence, as if there was no righteousness of another in which you might appear, and as if no propitiation had been made for you. If you want peace to your own minds, and a release to yourself from all its perplexities—better that you discard all the items of your own personal merit from the account of your acceptance with God. Go not to obliterate that clear line of demarcation which the apostle has drawn, between salvation by works and salvation by grace, and which he proposes to us as the only two terms of an alternative which cannot be compounded together; but of which, if the one

be chosen, the other must be entirely rejected. The foundation of your trust before God, must either be your own righteousness out and out, or the righteousness of Jesus Christ out and out. To attempt a composition of them is to lean on a foundation, of which many of the materials may be solid; but many of them also are brittle, and all of them are frailly cemented together with untempered mortar. If you are to lean upon your own merit, lean upon it wholly—If you are to lean upon Christ, lean upon Him wholly. The two will not amalgamate together; and it is the attempt to do so which keeps many a weary and heavy-laden enquirer at a distance from rest, and at a distance from the truth of the gospel. Maintain a clear and a consistent posture. Stand not before God with one foot upon a rock, and the other upon a treacherous quick-sand. And it is not your humility alone which we want to inspire—it is the stable peace of your hearts that we are consulting, when we tell you that the best use you can make of the law is to shut your mouth when it offers to speak in the language of vindication; and to let its requirements on the one hand, and your rebellion on the other, give you the conviction of sin.

In stepping over from the law as a ground of meritorious acceptance, step over from it wholly. Make no reservations. You are aware of the strenuousness with which Paul, in his Epistle to the Galatians, warded off the rite of circumcision from the church. He would admit of no compromise between one basis of acceptance and another. This were inserting a flaw and a false principle

into the principle of our justification; and to import the element of falsehood were to import the element of feebleness. We call upon you, not to lean so much as the weight of one grain or scruple of your confidence upon your own doings—to leave this ground entirely, and to come over entirely to the ground of a Redeemer's blood and a Redeemer's righteousness. Then you may stand firm and erect on a foundation strong enough and broad enough to bear you. You will feel that your feet are on a sure place; and we know nothing that serves more effectually to clear and disembarrass the mind of an enquirer from all its perplexities, than when the provinces of the law and the gospel, instead of mingling and mutually encroaching the one upon the other, come to be seen in all the distinctness of their character and offices. The law ministers condemnation and nothing else. The gospel, by its own unaided self, ministers that righteousness which finds acceptance with God. God has simply set forth Christ to be a propitiation. You have to look upon Him as such, and He becomes your propitiation. Make no doubt of its being an honest exhibition, which God makes of His Son. It is not an exhibition by which He intends to deceive you. And great will be your peace, when thus drawn away from yourself, and drawn towards the Saviour. It will be the commencement of a trust, that will establish the heart in comfort; and, though a mystery which cannot be demonstrated to the world, will it be the experience of every true believer, that it is the commencement of an affection which will establish the heart in the love and in the habit of holiness.

LECTURE XII.

ROMANS, iii, 27—31.

"Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? of works? nay; but by the law of faith. Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law. Is he the God of the Jews only? is he not also of the Gentiles? Yes, of the Gentiles also: seeing it is one God which shall justify the circumcision by faith, and uncircumcision through faith. Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law."

The term law may often be taken in a more general acceptation, than that of an authoritative rule for the observation of those who are subject to it. It may signify the method of succession, by which one event follows another—either in the moral or in the physical world; and it is thus that we speak of a law of nature, or a law of the human mind, thereby denoting the train or order of certain consecutive facts, which maintain an unvarying dependence among themselves. Both the law of works, and the law of faith, though the judicial character of God is strongly evinced in the establishment of them, may be understood here in this latter sense which we have just now explained. The law of works, is that law by which the event of a man's justification, follows upon the event of his having performed these works. The law of faith is that law, by which the event of a man's justification follows, upon the event of his conceiving faith—just as the law of gravitation is that law upon which

every body above the surface of the earth, when its support is taken away, will fall toward its centre; and as the law of refraction is that, upon which every ray of light, when it passes obliquely from air into water, is bent from the direction which it had formerly.

Ver. 29. It is good, for the purpose of keeping up in your mind the concatenation that obtains between one part of the epistle and the other, to mark every recurrence of similar terms which takes place in the prosecution of its argument. He had in the second chapter, made a pointed address to the Jew —who rested in the law, and made his boast of God. He now excludes his boasting; and in doing so reduces the Jew and the Gentile to the same condition of relationship with God.

Ver. 30. The term 'one' may either be taken numerically, or refers to the unity and unchangeableness of God's purpose.

By a preceding verse, the works of the law are set aside in the matter of our justification. And it comes in as an appropriate question—Is the law made void through this? What would have been consequent upon obedience to the law, is now made consequent upon faith; and does this nullify the law? No, it will be found that it serves to establish the law, securing all the honour which is due to the Lawgiver; perpetuating the obligation and authority of the law itself; and introducing into the heart of the believer such new principles of operation, as to work conformity between the law of God and the life of man, a conformity that is ever making progress here and will at length be perfected hereafter.

The passage now expounded scarcely requires any paraphrastic elucidation at all—yet agreeable to our practice we shall still offer one.

'Where is boasting then? It is excluded. In what method? By the method of justification through works? No, it is by the method of justification through faith. But if works had any part in our justification there would still be room for boasting—and we must therefore conclude since boasting is done away that they have no part at all—and that man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law. Is He only the God of the Jews? Is He not also the God of the Gentiles? Yes, of the Gentiles also—seeing that He the same God dispenses justification to both in the same way, that is, justifying the circumcision by faith and also the uncircumcision by faith. Do we then make the law void through faith? By no means. We rather establish the law.'

We now proceed as usual to press upon you, any such lessons as may be extracted from the passage of the day.

And first you know it to be a frequent evasion, on the part of those who dislike the utter excluding of works from that righteousness which justifies a sinner before God, that they hold the affirmation of Paul upon the subject to be of the ceremonial and not of the moral law. They are willing enough to discard obedience to the former, but not obedience to the latter, as having any efficacy in justification. And they will further acknowledge, that they have a much higher esteem for the latter than for the former; that they think greatly better of the man

who has the rectitudes of morality to signalize his character, than of the man who has only the ritual observations of a punctual and prescribed ceremonial to signalize his character; that all rites, be they Jewish or Christian, have a greatly inferior place in their estimation, to the virtues of social life, or to the affections of an inward and enlightened piety—insomuch that should there stand before them an individual of fidelity incorruptible, and of honour fearless and unspotted, and of humanity ever breathing the desires of kindness and ever busying itself with deeds of kindness in behalf of our species, and of patriotism linking all its energies with the good of his native land, and of gentleness shedding its mild and pleasing lustre over the walks of private companionship, and of affection kindling its still more intense and exquisite charm in the bosom of his home—why there would not be one moment's hesitation with them, whether the homage of their reverential and regardful feelings, were more due to such an individual, even though a stranger to the puritanical rigours of the sabbath and of the sacrament; or to him, who, trenched in the outward regularities of worship and of ordinance, had less of the graces and less of the honesties of character to adorn him—and you can well anticipate their reply to the question, Which of the two had the more to boast of—the man of social worth or the man of saintly exterior?

We are far from disputing the justness of their preference for the former of these two men; but we would direct them to the use that they should make of this preference—when turning to its right-

ful and consistent application the statement of our apostle, that from the affair of our justification all boasting is excluded. We ask them upon a reference to their own principles and feelings, whether this assertion of the inspired teacher points more to the exclusion of the moral or of the ceremonial law? Is it not the fair and direct answer that it points the more, to that of which men are inclined to boast the more? To set aside the law of works in the matter of our justification is not to exclude boasting at all—if it be only those works that are excluded, which beget no reverence when done by others, and no complacency when done by themselves. The exclusion of boasting might appear to the mind of an old Pharisee, as that which went to sweep away the whole ceremonial in which he gloried. But for the very same reason should it appear to the mind of him who is a tasteful admirer of virtue, to sweep away the moral accomplishments in which he glories. To him, in fact, the ceremonial law, in which he has no disposition to boast whatever, is not so touched by the affirmation of the apostle, as the moral law on which alone he would ground a boastful superiority of himself over others. The thing which is shut out here from the office of justification, is that thing which excites boasting in man. Carry this verse to the Jew who vaunted himself that he gave tithes and fasted twice in the week; and these are the observances, which, as to any power of justifying, are here done away. Carry this verse to the man who stands exalted over his fellows, either by the integrities which direct or by the kind humanities which adorn him;

and these all the virtues, which as to their power of justifying, are just as conclusively done away. Whatever you are most disposed to boast of, it is that upon which the sentence of expulsion most pointedly and most decisively falls; and the ground of a Pharisee's dependence on his conformities to the ceremonial law, is not more expressly cast away by this passage—than is the ground of his dependence, who, in our own more refined and cultivated age, would place his dependence before God on those moralities, which to him are the objects of a far more enlightened admiration, and of a far juster and truer complacency.

It is thus, that the towering pretensions, even of the most moral and enlightened of our sages in modern days, may be utterly overthrown. If there was then a greater tendency to boast of ceremonial observations, then was the righteousness of the ceremonial law most severely struck at by the apostle, as having no place in our justification. But if there be now a greater tendency to boast of moral observations, now is the righteousness of the moral law most pointedly the object of his attack, as out of propriety and of place in the matter of our justification. In a word, this verse has the same power and force of conclusion still, that it had then. It then reduced the boastful Jew to the same ground of nothingness before God, with the Gentile whom he despised. And it now reduces the eloquent expounder of human virtue to the same ground, with that drivelling slave of rites and punctualities whom he so tastefully and from the throne of his mental superiority, so thoroughly

despises—shutting in fact every mouth, and making the righteousness of all before God, not a claim to be challenged, but a gift to be humbly and thankfully accepted of from His hands.

This is far from the only passage, however, which excludes the moral as well as the ceremonial law from any standing in the province of our justification. In many places it is said, that our justification is not of works in the general, and without any addition of the term law at all, to raise the question whether it be the moral or ceremonial law that is intended. And in the preceding part of the epistle, they are moral violations which are chiefly instanced, for the purpose of making it out, that by the deeds of the law no flesh shall be justified. In the theft and adultery and sacrilege of the second chapter, and in the impiety and deceit and slander and cruelty of the third, we see that it was the moral law, and the offence of a guilty world against it, which the apostle chiefly had in his eye; and when, as the end of all this demonstration, he comes to the conclusion of the world's guilt—why should we restrict the apostle, as if he only meant to exclude the ceremonial law from the office of justifying? When he says that by the law is the knowledge of sin, is it the ceremonial law only that is intended—when in fact they were moral sins that he had all along been specifying? Or is it the sole purpose of the apostle, to humble those who made their boast of the ceremonial law—when he instances how the law administered to himself the conviction of his sinfulness, by fastening upon the tenth commandment, and telling us that he had

not been criminal, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet? What do you make of the passage where it is said, that we are saved—not by works of righteousness, which we have done? Does not this include all doings, be they of a moral or be they of a ceremonial character? And in the verses which immediately precede this quotation from Titus, whether think you was the moral or the ceremonial law most in the apostle's head—when, in alleging the worthlessness of all the previous doings of his own converts, he charged them with serving divers lusts and pleasures, and with living in malice and envy—hateful and hating one another? This distinction between the moral and ceremonial, is, in fact, a mere device, for warding off a doctrine, by which alienated nature feels herself to be pained and humbled and revolted, in all ages of the world. It is an opiate, by which she would fain regale the lingering sense that she so fondly retains of her own sufficiency. It is laying hold of a twig, by which she may bear herself up, in her own favourite attitude of independence upon God; and gladly would she secure the reservation of some merit to herself, and of some contributions out of her own treasury, to the achievement of her own justification. But this is a propensity, to which the apostle grants no quarter, and no indulgence whatever. Whenever it appears, he is sure to appear in unsparing hostility against it; and never will your mind and the mind of the inspired teacher be at one, till, reduced to a sense of your own nothingness, and leaning your whole weight on the sufficiency of another—you receive justifi-

cation as wholly of grace, and feel on this ground that every plea of boasting is overthrown.

We may here notice another shift, by which nature tries to ease herself of a conclusion so mortifying. She will at times allow justification to be of faith wholly; but then she will make a virtue of her faith. All the glorying that she would have associated with her obedience to the law, she would now transfer to her acquiescence in the gospel. The docility, and the attention, and the love of truth, and the preference of light to that darkness which they only choose whose deeds are evil —these confer, in her fond estimation, a merit upon believing; and here therefore would she make a last and a desperate stand, for the credit of a share in her own salvation.

If the verse under consideration be true, there must be an error in this imagination also. It leaves the sinner nothing to boast of at all; and should he continue to associate any glorying with his faith, then is he turning this faith to a purpose directly the reverse of that which the apostle intends by it.

There is no glory, you will allow, to yourself, in seeing with your eyes open that sun which stands visibly before you—whatever glory may accrue to Him, who arrayed this luminary in his brightness; and endowed you with that wondrous mechanism, which conveys the perception of it. There is no part of the glory of a gift, ascribed to the mendicant, who simply looks to it—whatever praise of generosity may be rendered to Him who is the giver; or still more to Him who hath conferred upon the hand its moving power, and upon the eye its seeing faculty. And even though the

beggar should be told to wait another day, and then to walk to some place of assignation, and there to obtain the princely donation that was at length to elevate his family to a state of independence—in awarding the renown that was due upon such a transaction, would it not be the munificence of the dispenser that was held to be all in all; and who would ever think of lavishing one fraction of acknowledgment, either upon the patience, or upon the exertion, or upon the faith of him who was the subject of all this liberality? And be assured that in every way, there is just as little to boast of on the part of him, who sees the truth of the gospel, or who labours to come within sight of it, or who relies on its promises after he perceives them to be true. His faith, which has been aptly termed the hand of the mind, may apprehend the offered gift and may appropriate it; but there is just as little of moral praise to be rendered on that account, as to the beggar for laying hold of the offered alms. It is with the man whom the gospel has relieved of his debt, as it is with the man whom the gold of a generous benefactor has relieved of his. There is nothing in the shape of glory that is due at all to the receiver; and nothing could ever have conjured up such an imagination, but the delusive feeling that cleaves to nature of her own sufficiency. There is not one particle of honour due to the sinner in this affair; and all the blessing and honour and glory of it must be rendered Him, who, in the face of His manifold provocations, and when He might have illustrated both the power of His anger and the triumphs of His justice, gave way to the movements of a compassion that is infinite; and

had with wisdom unsearchable, to find out a channel of conveyance—by which, in consistency with the glory of such attribute and with the principle of such a government as are unchangeable, He might call His strayed children back again to the arms of an offered reconciliation, and lavish on all who come the gift of a free pardon in time and a full perfection of happiness through eternity.

And to cut away all pretensions to glorying on the score of faith—the faith itself is a gift. The gospel is like an offer made to one who has a withered hand; and power must go forth with the offer ere the hand can be extended to take hold of it. The capacity of simply laying hold of the covenant of peace, is as much a grant, as is the covenant itself. The helpless and the weary sinner, who has looked so fruitlessly after the faith which is unto salvation, knows that the faculty of seeing with his mind, is just as necessary to him, as is the truth itself which is addressed to it. He knows that it is not enough for God to present him with an object; but He must also awaken his eye to the perception of it. And let him who wants the faith cavil as he may, in the vain imagination of a sufficiency that he would still reserve for man in the matter of his redemption—certain it is, that he who has the faith, sees the hand of God both in conferring it at the first, and in keeping it up afterwards—And, thankful both for the splendour of his hopes, and for the faculty of seeing it, his is an unmixed sentiment of humility and gratitude to the Being, who has called him out of darkness into the marvellous light of the gospel.

LECTURE XIII.

ROMANS, iv, 1—8.

What shall we then say that Abraham our father, as pertaining to the flesh, hath found? for if Abraham were justified by works, he hath whereof to glory; but not before God. For what saith the Scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness. Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt. But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness. Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works, saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin."

PAUL never forgets, in the course of this argument, that he is addressing himself to Jews; and, bred as he was in all their prejudices, he evinces a strong and a ready sense of the antipathies, that he would over and anon be stirring up in their minds, by the doctrine on which he expatiated. He knew how much they all gloried in Abraham and how natural it was for them therefore to feel that Abraham had something to glory of in himself; and, as he urged that faith which excludes boasting, the case of the patriarch occurred to him; nor could he have selected a better than that of one so eminently the favourite of God as he was, for illustrating the principle upon which God holds out friendship and acceptance to mankind.

Ver. 1. The term flesh does not stand related to the circumstance of Abraham being our father. It does not mean what is it that Abraham, our father

by earthly descent, hath found—but what is it that Abraham our father hath found by his natural or external performances. Whatever can be done by the powers of nature, can be done by the flesh. The outward observances of Judaism can be so done; and thus the Mosaic law is termed by Paul the law of a carnal commandment. In the question he puts to the Galatians—"Having begun in the Spirit are ye now made perfect by the flesh?" he is expostulating with those who thought that the rite of circumcision, one of the Jewish observances, was necessary to perfect their acceptance with God. Paul professes of himself, that he gloried not in the flesh; and, in enumerating the reasons which might have led him so to glory, he refers, not merely to his descent, but to his circumcision, and to his pharisaical zeal, and to his blamelessness in regard to the righteousness of the law. Abraham had rites and performances laid on him, and he was punctual in their observation; and the question is, What did Abraham procure by these services?

Ver. 2. If by these services he was justified, he has whereof to glory, whereof to boast himself. But no! his boasting too must be excluded. He has nothing whereof to glory of before God.

Ver. 3. Genesis, xv, 6. This is said of Abraham, previous, by several years, to the institution of the great Jewish rite of circumcision. He was in favour with God, before this deed of obedience. He was dealt with by God as a righteous person, before this work of righteousness was done by him. God had declared Himself to be his reward; and

by his trust in this declaration, did he become entitled to the reward. This conferred on it the character of a gift. Otherwise it would have been the payment of a debt, as of wages rendered for services performed.

Ver. 4. It would not have been regarded as a gratuitous thing, but as a thing due.

Ver. 5. Observe a few things here. The man who has obtained justification may be looked upon as in possession of a title-deed, which secures to him a right to God's favour. The question is, How comes he into possession of this title-deed? Did he work for it, and thus receive it as a return for his works? No, he did not work for it; and thus it is that justification is to him who worketh not—that is, he did nothing antecedent to his justification to bring this privilege down upon him; and it is a contradiction to allow that it is by doing any thing subsequent to justification that he secures this privilege, for it is secured already. He is now in possession of it—He has not to work for the purpose of obtaining what he already has. And neither did he work for it at the time that he had it not. He came to it not by doing but by believing. His is like the case of a man getting in a present the title to an estate. He did not work for it before it was presented, and so get it as a reward. It was a gift. He does not work for it after it is presented, for it is his already. But you must remark here—though it is not in consideration of works done either before or after the grant that the privilege was bestowed—yet that is not to say, but that the person so privileged becomes a

busy, diligent, ever-doing, and constantly-working man. When it is said that the faith of him who worketh not is counted for righteousness—it is meant, that he does not work for the purpose of obtaining a right of acceptance, and that it is not upon the consideration of his works that this right has been conferred upon him. But it is not meant that such a person works not for any purpose at all. To recur to the case of him who has a gratuitous estate conferred upon him, he neither worked for the estate before he obtained it, nor for it after he has obtained it. But from the very moment of his assured prospect of coming into the possession of it, may he have become most zealously diligent in the business of preparing himself for the enjoyment of all the advantages, and the discharge of all the obligations connected with this property. He may have put himself under the tuition of him who perhaps at one time possessed it, and knew it thoroughly, and could instruct him how to make the most of it. He did not work for it; but now that he has got it he has been set most busily a-working, though not for a right to the property, yet all for matters connected with the property. He may forthwith enter on a very busy process of education, to render him meet for the society of those with whom he is now in kindred circumstances. And thus with the Christian, who by faith receives the gift of eternal life. It cannot be put down to the account of works done, either before or after the deed of conveyance has passed into his hands. But no sooner does he lay hold of the deed, than he begins, and that most

strenuously to qualify himself for the possession—to translate himself into the kindred character of Heaven—to wean himself away from the sin and the sordidness of a world, which he no longer regards as his dwelling-place—and, with a foot which touches lightly that earth from which he is to ascend so soon into the fields of eternal glory that are above him, to aspire after the virtues which are current there; and, by an active cultivation of his heart, labour to prepare himself for a station of happiness and honour among the companies of the celestial.

We would further have you to remark, that you must beware of having any such view of faith, as will lead you to annex to it the kind of merit or of claim or of glorying under the gospel, which are annexed to works under the law. This in fact were just animating with a legal spirit, the whole phraseology and doctrine of the gospel. It is God who justifies. He drew up the title-deed, and He bestowed the title-deed. It is ours, simply by laying hold of it. The donor who grants a worldly estate to his friend, counts his friend to have right enough to the property by having received it. God who offers us an inheritance of glory, counts us to have right enough to the possession of it by our relying on the truth and the honesty of the offer. Under the law, obedience would have been that personal thing in us which stood connected with our right to eternal life. Under the gospel, faith is that personal thing in us which stands connected with this right; but just as the act of stretching forth his hand to the offered alms, is that personal

doing of the mendicant that stands connected with his possession of the money received by him. Any other view of faith than that which excludes boasting, must be altogether unscriptural; and will mislead the enquirer; and may involve his mind in much darkness, and in very serious difficulties. Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? of faith. It is of faith that it might be by grace—not that it might be a thing of merit, but a thing of freeness—a present. Ye are saved by grace through faith. Conceive it a question, whether a dwelling house is enlightened by a candle from within, or by an open window. The answer may justly enough be that it is by the window—and yet the window does not enlighten the house. It is the sun which enlightens it. The window is a mere opening for the transmission of that which is from without. Christ hath wrought out a righteousness for us that is freely offered to us of God. By faith we discern the reality of this offer; and all that it does is to strike out, as it were, an avenue of conveyance, by which the righteousness of another passes to us; and through faith are we saved by this righteousness.

Ver. 6–8. They are Jewish authorities which Paul makes use of, when he wants to school down Jewish antipathies—thus meeting his countrymen on their own ground; and never better pleased than when, on the maxim of all things to all men, he can reconcile them to a doctrine which they hate, by quoting in favour of it a testimony which they revere. Take sin in its most comprehensive sense, as including in it both the sin of omission

and the sin of performance; and then the opposite to this, or sinlessness, will imply, not only that there has been no performance of what is wrong, but no omission of what is right. In this sense sinlessness is not a mere negation, but is fully equivalent to righteousness; and not to impute sin, is tantamount to the imputation of righteousness. It is clear that the righteousness thus imputed, which the Psalmist refers to, was a righteousness without works—that is, without such works as could at all pretend to the character, or to any of the claims of righteousness. For what were the works of those who had this righteousness imputed to them? They were iniquities which had been forgiven, and sins which had been covered.

There are certain technical terms in theology which are used so currently, that they fail to impress their own meaning on the thinking principle. The term 'impute' is one of them. It may hold forth a revelation of its plain sense to you—when it is barely mentioned that the term impute in the 6th verse, is the same in the original with what is employed in that verse of Philemon where Paul says, "If he hath wronged thee, or oweth thee ought, put that on mine account." To impute righteousness to a man without works, is simply to put righteousness down to his account—though he has not performed the works of righteousness.

The following is the paraphrase of the passage.

'What shall we make then of our father Abraham; and how shall we estimate the amount of what he procured by those works of obedience which he rendered, and are still required of us by

a law that lays such things upon us as we are naturally able to perform? For if Abraham did procure justification to himself by these works, he hath something to glory of—though we have just now affirmed that all glorying is excluded. Our affirmation nevertheless stands good, for he hath nothing to glory of before God. And what saith the Scripture about this? Not that Abraham obeyed, and his obedience was counted; but Abraham believed God, and his belief was counted unto him for righteousness. Now to him that worketh and getteth reward for it, reward is not a favour; but the payment of what is due. But it is to him who worketh not for a right to acceptance, but believeth on Him who offereth this acceptance and justifieth the ungodly, that his faith is counted for righteousness. Even as David also describeth the blessedness of him to whom God reckoneth a righteousness without works—saying, blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are so hidden from remembrance, that they are no longer mentioned. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not reckon the guilt of his sin.'

The first lesson we draw from this passage is one which we have often urged in your hearing; but aware of the difference that there is between the work of urging a principle for the moral purpose of influencing the heart, and the work of urging a principle for the purpose of informing and rectifying the judgment—we do not feel it so much a vain repetition to come over and over the same thing, for the one of these purposes, as for the other

of them. To say what is thoroughly apprehended already, and that for the purpose of informing the mind, were tiresome and inapplicable; but to say what, when present to the view of the understanding, is fitted to work a spiritual impression, is said for the purpose of stirring up the mind. And this may be done, not in the way of presenting it with novelties; but the mind may be so stirred up in the way of remembrance. And this, by the way, suggests to us a very useful test of distinction, between one set of hearers and another, which may be turned by you all into a matter of self-application. The hearer, whose main relish it is to regale his intellect, will, in his appetite for what is original and argumentative and variegated, nauseate, as tasteless and fatiguing, the constant recurrence of the few but all-impressive simplicities of the gospel. The hearer, whose ruling desire it is to refresh and to edify the spiritual life, will no more feel distaste to the nourishment that he has already taken in for the food of the soul, than to the nourishment that he has already and often taken in for the food of the body. The desire for the sincere milk of the word, is not desire for amusement that he may gratify a thirst for speculation—but a desire for aliment, that he may grow thereby. And thus it is, that what may be felt as unsufferable sameness by him who roams with delight from one prospect and one eminence to another in the scholarship of Christianity, may in fact be the staple commodity of a daily and most wholesome ministration to him who, seeking like Paul for the practical objects of an acceptance and a righteousness with God, like

him counts all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of the Saviour; and like him is determined to know nothing, but Jesus Christ and Him crucified.

Let us not therefore be prevented from detaining you a few moments longer, by the doctrine, that, however much the most perfect of the species may have to glory of in the eye of his fellows, he has nothing to glory of before God. The apostle affirms this of Abraham, a patriarch whose virtues had canonized him in the hearts of all his descendants; and who from the heights of a very remote antiquity, still stands forth to the people of this distant age, as the most venerably attired in the worth and piety and all the primitive and sterling virtues of the older dispensation. As to his piety, of this we have no document at all, till after the time when God met him—till after that point in his history, which Paul assigns as the period of his justification by faith—till after he walked in friendship with the God who found him out an alien of nature; and stretching forth to him the hand of acceptance, shed a grace and a glory over the whole of his subsequent pilgrimage in the world. "Now if thou didst receive it, wherefore shouldst thou glory as if thou hadst not received it?" It is this question of the apostle, which, among the varied graces and accomplishments of a Christian, perpetuates his humility, as the garb and the accompaniment of them all. "Nevertheless not me, but the grace of God that is in me," is the great principle of explanation, which applies to every virtue that springs and grows and expands into luxuriance

and beauty on the character of man, after his conversion; and so keeps him humble amid all the heights of progressive excellence to which he is conducted. Certain it is, that it is not till after this period; that he acquires the right principle, or can make any right advances in the path of godliness; and that, whatever he had antecedently—whether of affection to parents, or of patriotic regard to country, or of mild and winning affability to neighbourhood, or of upright duty in the walks either of public or relative life to society around him, or of all that which calls forth the voice of man to testify in behalf of the virtues that are useful and agreeable to man—certain it is, that with every human being, prior to that great transition in his history which, in the face of all the ridicule excited by the term, we denominate his conversion—God is not the Being whose moral and judicial authority is practically recognized in any of these virtues, and he has nothing to glory of before God.

It is thus we should like to convince the good man of this world of his wickedness, and to warn him that the plaudits of the world's admiration here may be followed up by shame and everlasting contempt hereafter. In this visible and earthly scene, we are surrounded with human beings, all of whom are satisfied if they see in us of their own likeness; and, should we attain the average character of society, the general and collective voice of society will suffer us to pass. Meanwhile, and till God be pleased to manifest Himself, we see not God; and, not till the revelation of His likeness is made to us, do we see our deficiency from that image of

unspotted holiness—to be restored to which is the great purpose of the dispensation we sit under: And thus, in spiritual blindness and spiritual insensibility, do the children of alienated nature spend their days—lifting an unabashed front and bearing a confident pretension in society, even as the patriarch Job challenged the accusation of his friends and protested innocence and kindness and dignity before them; but who, when God Himself met his awakened eye, and brought the overpowering lustre of His attributes to bear upon him, said of Him whom he had only before heard of by the hearing of the ear, that, now he saw Him with the seeing of the eye, he abhorred himself and repented in dust and in ashes.

This is the sore evil under which humanity labours. It is sunk in ungodliness, while blindness hinders the seeing of it. The magnitude of the guilt is unfelt; and therefore does man persist in a most treacherous complacency. The magnitude of the danger is unseen; and therefore does man persist in a security most ruinous. There may be some transient suspicion of a hurt, but a gentle alarm may be hushed by a gentle application; and therefore the hurt, in the language of the prophet, is healed but slightly. Peace when there is no peace forms the fatal lethargy of a world lying in wickedness—a peace which we should like to break up, by setting in prospect before you now the dread realities of a future world; but a peace, which, with the vast majority we fear is never broken up, till these realities have encompassed them by their presence—even the sound of the last trumpet, and the appearance of

celestial visitors in the sky, and all the elements in commotion, and an innumerable multitude of new-risen men whose eyes have just opened on a firmament which lowrs preternaturally over a world that is going to expire—Oh it is sad to think that pulpits should have no power of disturbance, and the voice of those who fill them should die so impotently away from the ears of men who in a few little years will be sealed to this great catastrophe of our species—when tokens so portentous and preparations so solemn as these will mark that day of decision, which closes the epoch of time and ushers in an irrevocable eternity!

The second lesson which we should like to urge upon you is, that this disease of nature, deadly and virulent as it is, and that beyond the suspicion of those who are touched by it, is not beyond the remedy provided in the gospel. Ungodliness is the radical and pervading ingredient of this disease; and it is here said of God that He justifies the ungodly. The discharge is as ample as the debt; and the grant of pardon in every way as broad and as long, as is the guilt which requires it. The deed of amnesty is equivalent to the offence; and, foul in native and spiritual character as the transgression is, there is a commensurate righteousness which covers the whole deformity, and translates him whom it had made utterly loathsome in the sight of God, into a condition of full favour and acceptance before Him. Had justification been merely brought into contact with some social iniquity, this were not enough to relieve the conscience of him, who feels in himself the workings of a direct and spiritual iniquity against God—who is bur-

dened with a sense of his manifold idolatries against the love of Him, who requires the heart as a willing and universal offering—and perceives of himself that the creature is all his sufficiency; and that, grant him peace and health and abundance in this world, he would be satisfied to quit with God for ever, and to live in some secure and smiling region of atheism. This is the crying sin with every enlightened conscience. It is the iniquity of the heart that survives every outer reformation, and lurks in its profound recesses under the guise and semblance of many outward plausibilities—it is this, for which in the whole compass of nature, no healing water can be found, either to wash away its guilt, or to wash away its pollution. It is a sense of this which festers in the stricken heart of a sinner, and often keeps by him and agonizes him for many a day, like an arrow sticking fast. And it is not enough that justification be brought into contact with the sin of all our social and all our relative violations. It must be made to reach the deadliest element in our controversy with God, and be brought into contact, as it is in our text, with the sin of ungodliness.

And, to complete the freeness of the gospel. There are many who keep at a distance from its overtures of mercy, till they think they have felt enough and mourned enough over their need of them. Now we have no such command over our sensibilities; and the most grievous part of our disease is, that we are not sufficiently touched with the impression of its soreness; and we ought not thus to wait the progress of our emotions, while God is standing before us with a deed of justifica-

tion, held out to the ungodliest of us all. To give us an interest in the saying, that God justifieth the ungodly, it is enough that we count it a faithful saying, and that we count it worthy of all acceptation. It is very true, that we will not count it a faithful saying, unless, from some cause or other, (and no cause more likely than a desire to escape from the consequences of sin,) we have been induced to attend to it. And neither will we count it worthy of all acceptation, unless our convictions have led us to feel the need of a righteousness, and the value of an interest therein. But if your concern about your soul has been such, that you have been led to listen and that for your own personal behoof, to the offer of the gospel—that is warrant enough for us to explain to you the terms of it, and to crave your acceptance of them. Whatever your present alienation, whatever the present hardness of your heart under the sense of it, whatever there be within you to make out the charge of ungodliness, and whatever to aggravate that charge in your wretched apathy amid so much guilt and so much danger—here is God with a deed of righteousness, by the possession of which you will be accepted as righteous before Him; and which to obtain the possession of, you are not to work for as a reward, but to accept by a simple act of dependence. It becomes yours by believing; and while it is our office to deal out the doctrine of the gospel, we do it with the assurance, that, wherever the belief of its truth may light, it will not light wrong; but that, if the faith of this gospel be formed in the bosom of any individual who now hears us, it will be followed up by a fulfilment upon him of all its promises.

But thirdly, while the office of a righteousness before God is thus brought down, so to speak, to the lowest depth of human wickedness, and it is an offer by the acceptance of which all the past is forgiven—it is also an offer by the acceptance of which all the future is reformed. When Christ confers sight upon a blind man, he ceases to be in darkness; and when a rich individual confers wealth upon a poor, he ceases to be in poverty—and so, as surely, when justification is conferred upon the ungodly, his ungodliness is done away. His godliness is not the ground upon which the gift was awarded, any more than the sight of him who was blind is the ground upon which it was communicated, or than the wealth of him who was poor is the ground upon which it was bestowed. But just as sight and riches come out of the latter gifts, so godliness comes out of the gift of justification; and while works form in no way the consideration upon which the righteousness that availeth is conferred upon a sinner, yet no sooner is this righteousness granted than it will set him a-working. So that while we hold it a high privilege, that we can say to the ungodliest of you all, Here is the free and unconditional grant of a justification for you, the validity of which you have simply to rely upon—the privilege rises inconceivably higher in our estimation, that we can also say, how the unfailing fruit of such a reliance will be a personal righteousness emerging out of the faith which worketh by love, and which transforms into a new creature the man who truly entertains it.

LECTURE XIV.

ROMANS, iv, 9—15.

"Cometh this blessedness then upon the circumcision only, or upon the uncircumcision also? for we say that faith was reckoned to Abraham for righteousness. How was it then reckoned? when he was in circumcision, or in uncircumcision? Not in circumcision, but in uncircumcision. And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had yet being uncircumcised: that he might be the father of all them that believe, though they be not circumcised; that righteousness might be imputed unto them also: and the father of circumcision to them who are not of the circumcision only, but who also walk in the steps of that faith of our father Abraham, which he had being yet uncircumcised. For the promise, that he should be the heir of the world, was not to Abraham, or to his seed, through the law, but through the righteousness of faith. For if they which are of the law be heirs, faith is made void, and the promise made of none effect: because the law worketh wrath; for where no law is, there is no transgression."

In the passage which stands immediately before Paul had asserted of Abraham, that it was his faith and not his obedience which was counted unto him for righteousness; and that it was through the former medium, and not through the latter, that he attained the blessedness of those to whom God did not reckon the guilt of their offences. And from this particular instance, does he proceed, in the verse before us, to a more general conclusion upon the subject.

Ver. 9, 10. He resolves the question proposed in the 9th verse by adducing the case of Abraham. In what state was he when righteousness was im-

puted to him? The historical fact is, that he found acceptance with God, several years before the rite of circumcision was imposed upon him. The case of their own Abraham, was the case of one who was justified in uncircumcision. An agreement between him and God had previously been made. A covenant had previously been entered upon. There was a promise by God; and there was a faith by Abraham, which gave him a right to the fulfilment of it—and all this antecedent to his being circumcised. And when it was laid upon him as a binding observation, it was as the token or the memorial of what had passed between them. It was not the making of a new bargain. It was the sealing or the ratifying of an old one. It was not another deed of conveyance, but an infeftment upon the deed that had already been drawn out; and though circumcision should at any time be abolished, and some other form, as that of baptism, be substituted in its place, this no more affected the great principle upon which man acquires a right of property to a place in heaven, than the great principles of justice upon which an earthly possession is transferred from one man to another, would be affected by a mere change in the forms of an infeftment. The promise of God who cannot lie makes it sure; and yet a visible token may be of use in impressing its sureness, by serving the purpose of a more solemn declaration. It is just expressing the same thing symbolically, which had before been expressed by words. By refusing the second expression you draw back from the first; by joining in the second expression you only repeat

and ratify the first. Thus circumcision is a sign —not a covenant itself, but, in the language of Genesis, the token of a covenant. And thus also it is a seal, marking that more formal consent, (to a thing however that had been before agreed upon) which lays one or both of the parties under a more sure, or at least more solemn obligation.

Ver. 11. The term sign may be generally defined a mark of indication—as when we speak of the signs of the times, or of the signs of the weather. A sign becomes a seal, when it is the mark of any deed or any declaration, having actually come forth from him who professes to be the author of it. It authenticates it to be his—so that should it be a promise, it binds him to performance; or should it be an order, it carries along with it all the force of his authority; or should it be an engagement of any sort, it fastens upon him the obligation of discharging it. It may sometimes happen that a seal marks the concurrence of two parties in the matter to which it is affixed—and the sign of circumcision was just such a seal. It was enjoined by God. It was consented to by Abraham. God sealed by it the promise which He had formerly made of a righteousness to Abraham who believed; and Abraham expressed by it that he was a believer. It did not change the footing upon which Abraham obtained the favour that was due to righteousness. It only gave the form and the solemnity of a symbolical expression to that, which was already in full reality and effect, though it had only yet been the subject of a verbal expression. The symbolical expression

may afterwards be changed, or it may be dispensed with altogether; and yet the original connection between faith and the imputation of righteousness, subsist as it was at the beginning. Abraham is the primary model of this connection, and remains so after the abolition of that temporary rite which marked the Jewish economy. And now that that economy is dissolved, he is still the father of all them who believe though they be not circumcised —that like as righteousness was imputed to him when uncircumcised, so may it be imputed unto them also.

Ver. 12. It is not enough that they be of the circumcision, that they may be the children of Abraham, in the sense under which the apostle contemplates this relationship in the passage before us. It is faith which essentially constitutes this relationship. They who have the faith are his children, though they have not the circumcision. They who have the circumcision are not his children if they have not the faith. The sign without the thing signified will avail them nothing. It is true that circumcision is a seal set to by the will and authority of God, and guarantees a promise of righteousness on His part. But it is of righteousness unto faith; and when there is no faith, there is no failure of any promise connected with this subject, though it should remain unfulfilled. The way to ascertain the reality of this faith, is not by the simple act of a man submitting to have the seal of circumcision put upon him. It is by his walking in the steps of that faith which actuated the doings and the history of Abraham; and in

virtue of which he obtained a meritorious acceptance with God—even prior to the rite of circumcision being laid upon him.

Ver. 13. Not heir of the present evil world, but of a better country than this, that is an heavenly —a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God—a new earth, as well as new heavens, wherein dwelleth righteousness—Not to inherit this world, but to be counted worthy of obtaining that world upon which the righteous are made to enter after their resurrection from the dead. The promise of all this was not to those who obey, but to those who believe—not through the law, but through the righteousness of faith.

Ver. 14. If it be of the law, then it must be of perfect obedience to that law. It cannot be through the medium of a broken, but through the medium of an observed law; and not till its conditions are fulfilled, can faith have any warrant to lay hold of the promises. This is just as good as nullifying faith altogether; and just as good as rendering the promise quite ineffectual—because in fact there has been no perfect obedience. There have been infractions of the law by all, and all therefore are the children of wrath.

Ver. 15. To escape from this, there must be some other method of making out a righteousness unto eternal life than through the law; for, admit the arbitrations of the law, and wrath will be wrought out of them. Condemnation will be the sure result of this process. It must and will pronounce the guilt of transgression upon all; and, to get quit of this, there must be some way or other

of so disposing of the law, as that it shall not be brought to bear in judgment upon a sinner. It has been so disposed of. It has been magnified and made honourable in the person of our illustrious Redeemer; and so borne away from the persons of those who through faith in Him are made, by the constitution of the economy of the gospel, partakers of His righteousness. The judgment of the law has been shifted away from them; and, with this, the charge of transgression has been lifted away from them.

The following is the paraphrase.

'Doth the blessing of an imputed righteousness come then upon the circumcision only—or may it also come upon those who are uncircumcised? We have said that it came upon Abraham, and that it was faith which was reckoned unto him for righteousness. Now in what circumstances was he at the time when it was so reckoned? Was he in circumcision, or uncircumcision? Not in circumcision, but in uncircumcision. And circumcision he received, merely as a token or as a seal of the righteousness of that faith which he had when he was uncircumcised—that he might be the great exemplar of all those who after him should believe, though they were not circumcised—that to them also, even as unto him, there might be an imputation of righteousness—and that he might furthermore be the exemplar of those who were circumcised; and were at the same time, more than this, walking in the steps of that faith which their father Abraham had while uncircumcised. For the promise, that he should obtain the inheritance,

was not to Abraham or his seed through the law, but through the righteousness of faith. For if they only are to inherit who fulfil the law, then faith is rendered powerless, and the promise can have no fulfilment. Because the law worketh wrath and not favour; and it is only when it is taken out of the way that transgression is removed and righteousness can be imputed.'

The first lesson we shall endeavour to draw from this passage is, that it seems to contain in it the main strength of the scriptural argument for Infant Baptism. It looks a rational system, to make sure of the thing signified ere you impress the sign —to make sure of the belief ere you administer the baptism—if this outward ordinance signify any thing at all, to make sure that what is so signified be a reality. And all this has been applied with great appearance of force and plausibility to this question; and the principle educed out of it, that, ere this great and initiatory rite of our faith be laid upon any individual, he should make a credible profession of that faith. In confirmation of this, we are often bidden look to the order in which these two things succeeded one another in the first age of Christianity. We read of this one convert and that other having believed and been baptized; not of any having been baptized and then believing. And so this should be the order with every grown up person who is not yet baptized. Should there be any such person, who, from accidental circumstances, has not had this rite administered to him in his own country—demand the profession of his faith, and be satisfied that it is a credible pro-

fession, ere you baptize him. Let missionaries, these modern apostles, do the same in the pagan countries where they now labour—just as the first apostles did before them—just as was done with Abraham of old, who, agreeably to Paul's argument, first believed and afterwards underwent the rite of circumcision. But mark how it fared with the posterity of Abraham. He, the first Hebrew, believed and was circumcised; and it was laid down for a statute in Israel, that all his children should be circumcised in infancy. In like manner, the first Christians believed and were baptized; and, though there be no statute laid down upon the subject, yet is there no violation of any contrary statute, when all our children are baptized in infancy. At the origin of the two institutions the order of succession is the same with both. The thing signified took precedency of the sign. Along the stream of descent which issued from the first of them, this order was reversed, and by an express authority too, so as that the sign took precedency of the thing signified: And so has it been the very general practice, with the stream of descent that issued from the second of them; and if the want of express authority be pled against us, we reply that this is the very circumstance which inclines us to walk in the footsteps of the former dispensation. Express authority is needed to warrant a change; but it is not needed to warrant a continuation. It is this very want of express authority, we think, which stamps on the opposite system a character of presumptuous innovation. When once bidden to walk in a straight line, it

does not require the successive impulse of new biddings to make us persevere in it. But it would require a new bidding to justify our going off from the line, into a track of deviation. The first Christians believed and were baptized. Abraham believed and was circumcised. He transmitted the practice of circumcision to infants. We transmit the practice of baptism to infants. There is no satisfactory historical evidence of our practice having ever crept in—the innovation of a later period in the history of the church. Had the mode of infant baptism sprung up as a new piece of sectarianism, it would not have escaped the notice of the authorship of the times. But there is no credible written memorial of its ever having entered amongst us as a novelty; and we have therefore the strongest reason for believing, that it has come down in one uncontrolled tide of example and observation from the days of the apostles. And if they have not in the shape of any decree or statutory enactment that can be found in the New Testament, given us any authority for it—they at least, had it been wrong, and when they saw that whole families of discipleship were getting into this style of observation, would have interposed, and lifted up the voice of their authority against it. But we read of no such interdict in our Scriptures; and, in these circumstances, we hold the inspired teachers of our faith to have given their testimony in favour of infant baptism, by giving us the testimony of their silence.

It is vain to allege that the Jewish was a grosser dispensation—not so impregnated with life and

rationality and spiritual meaning as ours—with a ceremonial appended to it for the purpose mainly of building up a great outward distinction, between the children of Israel and all the other families that were on the face of the earth; and that this was one great use of circumcision, which, whether affixed during the period of infancy or advanced life, served equally to signalize the people, and so to strengthen that wall of separation, which, in the wisdom of Providence, had been raised for the sake of keeping the whole race apart from the general world, till the ushering in of a more comprehensive and liberal dispensation. The flesh profiteth nothing, says the Saviour, "the words I speak unto you they are spirit and they are life." But it so happens that in the ordinance of circumcision, there are the very spirit and the very life which lie in the ordinance of baptism. Viewed as a seal, it marks a promissory obligation on the part of God, of the same privileges in both cases; and that is the righteousness of faith. Viewed as a sign, it indicates the same graces. It indicates the existence of faith, and all its accompanying influences on the character of him who has been subjected to it. That is not circumcision which is outward in the flesh, says Paul; but circumcision is of the heart, in the spirit and not in the letter. That is not baptism, says Peter, which merely puts away the filth of the flesh; but baptism is the answer of a good conscience unto God. If the baptism of infants offer any violence to the vital and essential principles of that ordinance—the principles of the ordinance of circumcision are

altogether the same. Circumcision is the sign of an inward grace; and upon Abraham, in the previous possession of this grace, the sign was impressed. And, in the face of what might have been alleged, that it was wrong when the sign and the thing signified did not go together—this sign of circumcision was nevertheless perpetuated in the family of Abraham, by being impressed on the infancy of all his descendants. In like manner, when an adult stands before us for baptism, should we be satisfied that he has had the washing of regeneration, then may we put the question—'Can any man forbid water, that he should not be baptized who has received the Holy Ghost as well as we?' But should any man go further, and forbid water to the infants of his present or his future family, he appears to do so on a principle which God Himself did not recognize; and, while he seems to exalt faith over forms, by waiting for the rise of this inward grace ere he will impose the outward ceremonial, he stamps a reflection on that very procedure that was instituted for him who is called the father of the faithful.

But is it not wrong, when the sign and the thing signified do not go together? Yes, it is very wrong; and let us shortly consider who they generally are that are in the wrong, when such a disjunction at any time occurs. In the case of an adult, the thing signified should precede the sign. When he offers himself for baptism, he asks to be invested with the sign that he is a disciple—and he makes a credible appearance and profession of his being so. Were it not a credible profession, then the administrator

is in the fault, for having put the outward stamp of Christianity on one whom he believed to be a counterfeit. Were it a profession, rendered credible by the arts of hypocrisy, then the minister is free; and the whole guilt that arises from an unworthy subject, standing arrayed in the insignia of our faith, lies upon him who wears them. But in the case of an infant, the sign precedes the thing signified. The former has been imprest upon him by the will of his parent; and the latter remains to be worked within him by the care of his parent. If he do not put forth this care, he is in the fault. Better that there had been no sign, if there was to be no substance; and he by whose application it was that the sign was imprinted, but by whose neglect it is that the substance is not infused—he is the author of this mockery upon ordinances. He it is who hath made the symbolical language of Christianity the vehicle of a falsehood. He is like the steward who is entrusted by his superior with the subscription of his name to a space of blank paper, on the understanding that it was to be filled up in a particular way, agreeable to the will of his lord; and, instead of doing so, has filled it up with matter of a different import altogether. The infant, with its mind unfilled and unfurnished, has been put by the God of providence into his hands; and after the baptism which he himself hath craved, it has been again made over to him with the signature of Christian discipleship, and, by his own consent, impressed upon it; and he, by failing to grave the characters of discipleship upon it, hath unworthily betrayed the trust that was reposed in him;

and, like the treacherous agent who hath prostituted his master's name to a purpose different from his master's will, he hath so perverted the sign of Heaven's appointment, as to frustrate the end of Heaven's ordination. The worthies of the Old Testament, who, in obedience to the God whom they served, circumcised their children in infancy, never forgot that they were the children of the circumcision; and the mark of separation they had been enjoined to impose upon them, reminded them of the duty under which they lay, to rear them in all the virtues of a holy and a separate generation; and many a Hebrew parent was solemnized by this observance into the devotedness of Joshua, who said, that whatever others should do, he with all his house should fear the Lord; and this was the testimony of the Searcher of hearts in behalf of one who had laid the great initiatory rite of Judaism upon his offspring, that He knew him, that he would bring up his children after him in all the ways and statutes and ordinances that he had himself been taught; and it was the commandment of God to His servants of old, that they should teach their children diligently, and talk to them as they rose up and sat down, and as they walked by the wayside, of the loyalty and gratitude that should be rendered to the God of Israel. Thus was the matter ordered under the old dispensation. The sign was impressed upon the infant, and it served for a signal of duty and direction to the parent. It pointed out to him the moral destination of his child, and led him to guide it onward accordingly. There ought to be a correspondence between the

sign and the thing signified. At the very outset of the child's life, did the parent fix upon its person the one term of its correspondence, as a mark of his determination to fix upon its character the other term of it. It was as good as his promissory declaration to that effect; and if this be enough to rationalize the infant circumcision of the Jews, it is equally enough to rationalize the infant baptism of Christians. The parent of our day, who feels as he ought, will feel himself in conscience to be solemnly charged, that the infant whom he has held up to the baptism of Christianity, he should bring up in the belief of Christianity; and if he fail to do this, it is he who has degraded this simple and impressive ceremonial into a thing of nought —it is he who has dissolved the alliance between the sign and the thing signified—it is he who brings a scandal upon ordinances, by stripping them of all their respect and all their significancy. Should the child live and die unchristian, there will be a proper and essential guilt attached to him in consequence; but it will at least not be the guilt of having broken a vow which he was incapable of making. And yet the vow was made by some one. It was made by the parent; and in as far as the ruin of the child may be resolved into the negligence of him to whom he owes his birth, it is he who moved the baptism and it is he who hath profaned it.

This ordinance lays a responsibility on parents —the sense of which has, we doubt not, given a mighty impulse to the cause of Christian education. It is well that there should be one sacrament in behalf of the grown up disciple, for the

solemn avowal of his Christianity before men; and the very participation of which binds more closely about his conscience all the duties and all the consistencies of the gospel. But it is also well that there should be another sacrament, the place of which in his history is, not at the period of his youth or manhood, but at the period of his infancy; and the obligation of which is felt, not by his conscience still in embryo, but by the conscience of him whose business is to develope and to guard and to nurture its yet unawakened sensibilities. This is like removing baptism upward on a higher vantage ground. It is assigning for it a station of command and of custody at the very fountain-head of moral influence; and we repeat it to be well, that Christianity should have here fixed one of its sacraments—that it should have reared such a security around the birth of every immortal—that it should so have constituted baptism, as to render it a guide and a guardian, whose post is by the cradle of the infant spirit; and which, from coming into contact with the first elements of tuition, has, we doubt not, from this presiding eminence, done much to sustain and perpetuate the faith of the gospel from generation to generation.

We have one observation more. Baptism, viewed as a seal, marks the promise of God, to grant the righteousness of faith to him who is impressed by it; but, viewed as a sign, it marks the existence of this faith. But if it be not a true sign, it is not an obligatory seal. He who believes and is baptized shall be saved. But he who is baptized and believes not shall be damned. It is not the cir-

cumcision which availeth, but a new creature. It is not the baptism which availeth, but the answer of a good conscience. God hath given a terrible demonstration of the utter worthlessness of a sign that is deceitful, and hath let us know that on that event as a seal it is dissolved. He thus stands emancipated from all His promises, and adds to His direct vengeance upon iniquity, a vengeance for the hypocrisy of its lying ceremonial. When a whole circumcised nation lost the spirit, though they retained the letter of the ordinance, He swept it away. The presence of the letter, we have no doubt, heightened the provocation; and beware, ye parents, who regularly hold up your children to the baptism of water, and make their baptism by the Holy Ghost no part of your concern or of your prayer—lest you thereby swell the judgments of the land, and bring down the sore displeasure of God upon your families.

This affords, we think, something more than a dubious glimpse into the question, that is often put by a distracted mother, when her babe is taken away from her—when all the converse it ever had with the world, amounted to the gaze upon it of a few months or a few opening smiles, which marked the dawn of felt enjoyment; and ere it had reached perhaps the lisp of infancy, it, all unconscious of death, had to wrestle through a period of sickness with its power and at length to be overcome by it. Oh, it little knew, what an interest it had created in that home where it was so passing a visitant—nor, when carried to its early grave, what a tide of emotion it would raise among the few acquaint-

ances it left behind it! On it too baptism was imprest as a seal, and as a sign it was never falsified. There was no positive unbelief in its little bosom—no resistance yet put forth to the truth—no love at all for the darkness rather than the light—nor had it yet fallen into that great condemnation which will attach to all who perish because of unbelief, that their deeds are evil. It is interesting to know that God instituted circumcision for the infant children of Jews, and at least suffered baptism for the infant children of those who profess Christianity. Should the child die in infancy, the use of baptism as a sign has never been thwarted by it; and may we not be permitted to indulge a hope so pleasing, as that the use of baptism as a seal remains in all its entireness—that He who sanctioned the affixing of it to a babe, will fulfil upon it the whole expression of this ordinance: And when we couple with this the known disposition of our great forerunner—the love that He manifested to children on earth—how He suffered them to approach His person—and, lavishing endearment and kindness upon them in the streets of Jerusalem, told His disciples that the presence and company of such as these in heaven formed one ingredient of the joy that was set before Him—Tell us if Christianity do not throw a pleasing radiance around an infant's tomb? and should any parent who hears us, feel softened by the touching remembrance of a light, that twinkled a few short months under his roof, and at the end of its little period expired—we cannot think that we venture too far, when we say that he has only to persevere in the

faith and in the following of the gospel, and that very light will again shine upon him in heaven. The blossom which withered here upon its stalk, has been transplanted there to a place of endurance; and it will then gladden that eye which now weeps out the agony of an affection that has been sorely wounded; and in the name of Him who if on earth would have wept along with them, do we bid all believers present, to sorrow not even as others which have no hope, but to take comfort in the thought of that country where there is no sorrow and no separation.

> O, when a mother meets on high
> The babe she lost in infancy,
> Hath she not then, for pains and fears—
> The day of woe, the watchful night—
> For all her sorrow, all her tears—
> An over-payment of delight?

We have put forth these remarks, not for the purpose of inspiring a very violent distaste towards the practice of others in respect of baptism, but of reconciling you to your own; and of protecting you from any disturbance of mind, on account of their arguments. It forms no peculiarity of the age in which we live, that men differ so much in matters connected with Christianity; but it forms a very pleasing peculiarity, that men can do now what they seldom did before, they can agree to differ. With zeal for the essentials, they can now tolerate each other in the circumstantials of their faith; and under all the variety which they wear, whether of complexion or of outward observance, can recognize the brotherhood of a common doc-

trine and of a common spirit, among very many of the modern denominations of Christendom. The line which measures off the ground of vital and evangelical religion, from the general ungodliness of our world, must never be effaced from observation; and the latitudinarianism which would tread it under foot, must be fearfully avoided; and an impregnable sacredness must be thrown around that people, who stand peculiarized by their devotedness and their faith from the great bulk of a species who are of the earth and earthly. There are landmarks between the children of light and the children of darkness, which can never be moved away; and it were well that the habit of professing Christians was more formed on the principle of keeping up that limit of separation, which obtains between the church and the world—so that they who fear God should talk often together; and when they do go forth by any voluntary movement of their own on those who fear Him not, they should do it in the spirit, and with the compassionate purpose of missionaries. But while we hold it necessary to raise and to strengthen the wall by which the fold is surrounded—and that, not for the purpose of intercepting the flow of kindness and of Christian philanthropy from within, but for the purpose of intercepting the streams of contamination from without—we should like to see all the lines of partition that have been drawn in the fold itself utterly swept away. This is fair ground for the march of latitudinarianism—and that, not for the object of thereby putting down the signals of distinction between one party of Christians and

another; but, allowing each to wear its own, for the object of associating them by all the ties and the recognitions of Christian fellowship. In this way, we apprehend, that there will come at length to be the voluntary surrender of many of our existing distinctions, which will far more readily give way by being tolerated than by being fought against. And this is just the feeling in which we regard the difference, that obtains on the subject of baptism. It may subside into one and the same style of observation, or it may not. It is one of those inner partitions which may at length be overthrown by mutual consent; but, in the mean time, let the portals of a free admittance upon both sides be multiplied as fast as they may along the whole extent of it; and let it no longer be confounded with the outer wall of the great Christian temple, but be instantly recognized as the slender partition of one of its apartments, and the door of which is opened for the visits of welcome and kind intercourse to all the other members of the Christian family.

Let it never be forgotten of the Particular Baptists of England, that they form the denomination of Fuller and Carey and Ryland and Hall and Foster; that they have originated among the greatest of all missionary enterprises; that they have enriched the Christian literature of our country with authorship of the most exalted piety, as well as of the first talent and the first eloquence; that they have waged a very noble and successful war with the hydra of Antinomianism; that perhaps there is not a more intellectual community of ministers in our island, or who have put forth to

their number a greater amount of mental power and mental activity in the defence and illustration of our common faith; and, what is better than all the triumphs of genius or understanding, who, by their zeal and fidelity and pastoral labour among the congregations which they have reared, have done more to swell the lists of genuine discipleship in the walks of private society—and thus both to uphold and to extend the living Christianity of our nation.

LECTURE XV.

ROMANS, iv, 16—22.

"Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace; to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed; not to that only which is of the law, but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham; who is the father of us all, (as it is written, I have made thee a father of many nations,) before him whom he believed, even God, who quickeneth the dead, and calleth those things which be not as though they were. Who against hope believed in hope, that he might become the father of many nations, according to that which was spoken, So shall thy seed be. And being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead, when he was about an hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sara's womb: he staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; and being fully persuaded that what he had promised he was able also to perform. And therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness."

Ver. 16. You may here remark, that faith is not a meritorious work in the business of our salvation. It does not stand in the place of obedience, as the term of a new bargain, that has been substituted in room of an old one. It is very natural to conceive, that, as under the old covenant we had salvation for our works—so, under the new, we have salvation for our faith; and that therefore faith is that which wins and purchases the reward. And thus faith is invested, in the imagination of some, with the merit and character of a work; and Heaven's favour is still looked upon as a premium, not a premium for doing, it is true, but a premium for believing: And this, as we have already said, has

just the effect of infusing the legal spirit into the letter and expression of our evangelical system; and thus, not merely of nourishing the pride and the pretension of its confident votaries, but of prolonging the disquietude of all earnest and humble enquirers. For, instead of looking broadly out on the gospel as an offer, they look as anxiously inward upon themselves for the personal qualification of faith, as they ever did upon the personal qualification of obedience. This transfers their attention from that which is sure, even the promises of God—to that which is unsure, even their own fickle and fugitive emotions. Instead of thinking upon Christ, they are perpetually thinking upon themselves—as if they could discover Him in the muddy recesses of their own heart, without previously admitting Him by the avenue of a direct and open perception. They ought surely to cast their challenged and their invited regards on Him, who is the same to-day, yesterday, and for ever, when He calls them by His word, to look upon Him from all the ends of the earth and be saved. But no! they cast their eyes with downward obstinacy upon their own minds; and there toil for the production of faith in the spirit of bondage; and perhaps, after they are satisfied with the fancied possession of it, rejoice over it as they would over any other meritorious acquirement in the spirit of legality. This is not the way in which the children of Israel looked out upon the serpent that was lifted up in the wilderness. They did not pore upon their wounds to mark the progress of healing there; nor did they reflect upon the power and perfection of

their seeing faculties; nor did they even suffer any doubt that still lingered in their imaginations, to restrain them from the simple act of lifting up their eyes: And when they were cured in consequence, they would never think of this as a reward for their looking, but regard it as the fruit of Heaven's gracious appointment. Do in like manner. It will make both against your humility and your peace, that you regard faith in the light of a meritorious qualification; or that you attempt to draw a comfort from the consciousness of faith, which you ought primarily and directly to draw from the contemplation of the Saviour. If salvation be given as a reward for faith, then it is not of grace. But we are told in this verse that it is of faith, expressly that it might be by grace. And therefore be assured, that there is an error in all those conceptions of faith which tend to vitiate or to destroy this character; which make the good things of the gospel come down upon you as a payment, and not as a present; which make the preaching of eternal life through Christ any thing else than simply the offer of a gift, and faith any thing else than simply the discerning of this offer to be true, and receiving it accordingly. In the one way, you can only be as sure of the promise as you are sure of yourself; and what a frail and fluctuating dependence is this, we would ask? In the other way, you are as sure of the promise, as you are sure of God; and thus your confidence has a rock to repose upon; and the more firmly you adhere and are rivetted to this foundation, the less chance is there of your ever being moved away from the hope of the gospel; and

though this be established, not on what is within but on what is without you, let us not thereby imagine that all the securities for personal worth and personal excellence are thereby overthrown—for it is in the very attitude of leaning upon God, that man is upheld not only in hope but in holiness. It is in the very position of standing erect upon the foundation of the promises, that the promised strength as well as the promised righteousness is fulfilled to him. It is in the very act of looking unto Jesus, that the light of all that grace and truth and moral lustre which shine upon him from the countenance of the Saviour is let in upon the soul; and is thence reflected back again in the likeness of this worth and virtue from his own person. We have no fear whatever of a simple dependence on the grace of the gospel, operating as an impediment to the growth of the holiness of the gospel. We believe that it is the alone stay of our deliverance from the power of sin, just as it is the alone stay of our deliverance from the fears of guilt: And, meanwhile, go not to obscure the aspect of this free and generous ministration, by regarding the gospel in any other light, than as an honestly announced present of mercy to all who will; or by regarding the faith of the gospel in any other light, than you would the ear that heard the communication of the present, or than you would the hand that laid hold of it.

But, to return from this digression. Ver. 16, 17. The inheritance is of faith, that it might be by grace, which can be extended to many nations; and not of the law, which would confine it to one

nation. This makes it sure to the whole seed of Abraham, not merely to his seed by natural descent, but to that seed which stands related to him from being believers. It is in this sense that it is written of him—he is the father of many nations. It was his faith which introduced him into a filial relationship with God; and in the eyes of God, on whom he believed, all who believed after him were regarded as his children. It was very unlikely that Abraham should in any sense be blest with an offspring. But God calleth out from nonentity such things as be not—and He also sees such an analogy between natural and spiritual things, that He gives to a spiritual relationship the name of a natural relationship. He did both in the case of Abraham. In the face of a very strong unlikelihood, He conferred a real posterity on Abraham. And He constituted him in a mystical sense the father of a still more extended posterity, by making him the father of all who believed.

Ver. 18. Abraham, perhaps, had no suspicion, at the utterance of this promise, of any deep or spiritual meaning that lay under it. He certainly apprehended it in its natural sense, and perhaps in this sense alone. Looking forward to it with the eye of experience, he could have no hope; but looking forward to it with the eye of faith in the divine testimony, he might have a confident expectation. It is this which is meant by 'against hope believing in hope.' The stronger the improbability in nature, the stronger was the faith which overcame the impression of it. He suffered not

himself to be staggered out of his reliance on that which was spoken. He thus rendered an homage to the truth of God; and an homage proportional to the unlikelihood of the thing which God testified. It was also an homage to His power as well as to His truth. It proved that he thought Him able to arrest and to turn nature; and if He promised to do so, that what He promised He was able also to perform. And this faith was counted to him for righteousness. God was pleased with the confidence that was placed in Him; and His pleasure in it was enhanced by the trials and difficulties which it had to contend with. It is thus that God's honour, and man's interest are at one. We honour Him by believing. By believing we are saved. The fuller and firmer our persuasion in His truth, the greater is the homage that we render Him, and the more abundant are both the present peace and the future glory which we bring down upon ourselves. To hope against hope—to believe in the midst of violent improbabilities—to realize the future things which are addrest to faith, and are so unlike those present things with which nature surrounds us—to maintain an unshaken confidence because God hath spoken, though the besetting urgencies of sense and experience all tend to thwart and to dislodge it—These are the trials which, if faith overcome, make that faith more precious than gold in the sight of our heavenly witness; and it will be found to praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ.

The following is the paraphrase of this passage.

'Therefore the promised inheritance is of faith,

that it might be by grace, which can be extended to all—so as to ensure the promise to the whole generation of believers, not only to those who are of the law, but to those who have the faith of Abraham, the father and the forerunner of us all. Agreeably to the scripture, "I have made thee a father of many nations," which he is in the eye and estimation of Him on whom he believed—even God, who, by quickening that which is dead and dormant, both called forth a real posterity to Abraham, and also constituted him the spiritual father of a posterity far more extended than that of which he was the natural progenitor. This looked most unlikely to the eye of nature and experience; but, in the face of all the improbabilities which would have darkened the hope of other men, did he with confidence hope, that he should become the father of many nations—according to the word that was spoken to him about what his posterity should be. And being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead, when he was yet about an hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sarah's womb. He staggered not at God's promise through unbelief, but was strong in faith, thereby giving glory to God's faithfulness. And being fully persuaded, that what He had promised He was able also to perform. And therefore was it reckoned unto him for righteousness.'

The lessons we shall try to enforce from this passage, are all founded on the consideration, that Abraham, in respect of his faith, was set up as a model to us—that, in like manner as he believed in the midst of difficulties and trials, so ought we—

heard by the spiritual ear; and, therefore, you are not made to feel too much, though you feel as earnestly as if 'now or never' was the alternative on which you were suspended. It is not enough, that the word of God, compared to a hammer, be weighty and powerful. The material on which it works must be capable of an impression. It is not enough, that there be a free and forcible application. There must be a willing subject. You are unwilling now, and therefore it is that conversion does not follow. To-morrow, the probability is, that you will be still more unwilling—and therefore, though the application be the same, the conversion is still at a greater distance away from you. And thus, while the application continues the same, the subject hardens; and a good result is ever becoming more and more unlikely; and thus may it go on till you arrive, upon the bed of your last sickness, at the confines of eternity; and what, we would ask, is the kind of willingness that comes upon you then? Willing to escape the pain of hell—this you are now, but yet not willing to be a Christian. Willing that the fire and your bodily sensations be kept at a distance from each other—this you are now, for who of you at present would thrust his hand among the flames? Willing that the frame of your animal sensibilities shall meet with nothing to wound or to torture it—this is willingness of which the lower animals, incapable of religion, are yet as capable as yourself. You will be as willing then for deliverance from material torments as you can be now; but there is a willingness which you want now, and which, in all likelihood will then be

still more beyond the reach of your attainment. If the free gospel do not meet with your willingness now to accept and to submit to it, neither may it then. And we know not, my brethren, what has been your experience in death-beds; but sure we are, that both among the agonies of mortal disease, and the terrors of the malefactor's cell, Christ may be offered, and the offer be sadly and sullenly put away. The free proclamation is heard without one accompanying charm; and the man who refused to lay hold of it through life, finds that, in the impotency of his expiring grasp, he cannot apprehend it. And oh, if you but knew how often the word of faith may fall from the minister, and the work of faith be left undone upon the dying man—never would you so postpone the purposes of seriousness, or look forward to the last week of your abode upon earth as to the convenient season for winding up the concerns of a neglected eternity.

If you look attentively to the text, you will find, that there is something more than a shade of difference between being reconciled and being saved. Reconciliation is spoken of as an event that has already happened—salvation as an event that is to come. The one event may lead to the other; but there is a real distinction between them. It is true, that the salvation instanced in the preceding verse, is salvation from wrath. But it is the wrath which is incurred by those who have sinned wilfully, after they had come to the knowledge of the truth —"when there remaineth no more sacrifice for sin, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversa-

over prophecies that stood linked with the life of Isaac in the world. He knew that God would find a way of His own to their accomplishment; and it was this which bore him onward to the full proof and vindication of his faith: And should we be at a loss to comprehend what is meant by against hope believing in hope, we see in this trial that was laid upon Abraham, and in the acquittal he made of himself, the most plain and picturesque exhibition of it.

Now to be strong in faith as he was, to cherish the full persuasion that he did, to believe with him in the midst of obstacles, to make the glory of God's truth carry it over the appearances of nature, so as to stagger not in the face of them, but to hope against hope—this is still the exercise of every Christian mind, and it were well to be guided therein by the example of this venerable patriarch. Such is the way in which the message of the gospel is constructed—such are the terms of that embassy with which its ministers are charged, that the promise of God as a shield, and of God as an exceeding great reward, is as good as laid down at the door of every individual who hears it. It is true that the promise thus laid down will not be fulfilled upon him, unless he take it up; or, in other words, unless he believe it. Now there is a difficulty in the way of nature believing any such thing. There is a struggle that it must make with its own fears and its own suspicions, ere it can admit the credibility of a holy God thus taking sinners into acceptance. There is an unlikelihood here, which is ever obtruding itself on the appre-

hensions of the guilty, and which tends to keep the offered peace and pardon and reconciliation of the gospel at an exceedingly hopeless distance away from them. Can it indeed be true that God is at this moment beseeching me to enter into agreement with Him? Can it indeed be true that a way of approach has been devised, open for admittance to myself; and on which, if I am found, I am met by the loving kindness and tender mercies of Him who looks so fearful to my imagination? Can it be true of that lofty and tremendous Being who sits on a throne of majesty; and with whom I have been wont to associate the characters of jealousy, and wrath, and a sacredness so remote and inflexible, that none may draw nigh unto it—can it be true that He is now bending compassionately over me, and entreating my return from those paths of alienation in which I have all along wandered? We indeed read of an adjusted ceremonial, by which sinners may be brought within the limits of His august sanctuary; and we read of a Mediator who hath made the rough places plain, and levelled the otherwise impassable mountains of iniquity which stood between us and God: But can it indeed be true, that Christ is wooing and welcoming our approach towards Him, and if we only come with reliance to Him as to the mercy-seat, then to us there will be no condemnation? Nature may strongly desire such a consummation; but nature strongly doubts its possibility. And it takes a struggle to surmount her apprehensions; and it is against hope if she believe in hope; and there is a contest here to be gone through, ere our fears

of that inflexible truth which has proclaimed in the hearing of our conscience the curses of a violated law, shall be overcome by our faith in that truth, which proclaims in Scripture the blessings of a free and offered gospel. And here then let the example of Abraham be proposed to cheer our way over this barrier of unbelief. Let us stoutly imitate him in the resolute combat he held with the misgivings of nature. Let even the very chief of sinners face the unlikelihood that such as he can be taken into friendship with the God, before whom his profaneness and profligacy have hitherto risen as a smoke of abomination. Let even him buoy up his expectations, against the whole weight and burden of this despondency. Improbable as it may look to the eye of nature, that an outcast so polluted and so loathsome can be admitted into the honours of righteousness; and that though onward to the point of his present history he be crimsoned over with the guilt of ungodliness, can not only be forgiven, but be justified—yet let him against this hope believe in hope, and the stronger his faith the more abundant to him will be the imputation of righteousness. In that very proportion in which he has heretofore trampled on the glory of God by his disobedience, will he render a glory to His truth by now believing in Him who justifieth the ungodly. Let him consider the faith of Abraham, and let the expressions which the apostle employs to characterize it now crowd upon his observation, and carry all doubt and timidity before them. It is just by standing on the truth of the gospel, and then bearing up under the sense of the guilt that

hangs over us—it is just by firmly and determinedly persisting in this attitude of confidence on the word of God, even in the midst of all which without that word should sink us into despair—it is just by so doing, that like Abraham we stagger not because of unbelief; and like him we against hope believe in hope; and like him we are not weak in the faith, but by being strong in it give glory to God; and like him are fully persuaded that what God hath promised, He is able to perform; and like him be assured, the guiltiest of you all, that if such be your faith, held firm and fast even unto the end—like as unto him so will this faith be imputed unto you for righteousness.

There is another great unlikelihood in the matter of Christianity, to call forth the exercise of against hope believing in hope—not merely that God's disposition towards us should be so changed as that He shall regard us with an eye of acceptance, but that our disposition toward God shall be so changed as to make us happy in the fellowship of a common character and of a congenial intercourse with Him. This we are not by nature. Our delighted converse is with the things that are made, and not with the Maker of them. In reference to Him there is the insensibility of spiritual death; and the great transition that we have to undergo ere Heaven can to us be a place of kindred enjoyment, is to be made alive again. For this purpose there must be a revival, which no putting forth of any constitutional energy in man can at all accomplish—a process of quickening, which nature cannot originate, and nature cannot carry

forward—a resurrection of the soul, that is as far beyond the bidding of any human voice, as is the egress of a reanimated body from the grave. The man who knows how steeped all his feelings and all his faculties are in ungodliness, knows the moral and spiritual birth that we are now adverting to, to be against the current of all his former experience, and beyond the achievement of all his present most strenuous exertions. And if against hope he believe in the hope, that such a regeneration shall be begun or perfected in him, it will be on the footing of some such promise as sustained the expectations of the patriarch. This unfolds to us the link which connects our faith with our sanctification. God hath promised the clean heart and the right spirit to all who are in Christ Jesus; and, according to the firmness of our reliance upon this promise, will be the fulness of its accomplishment upon our persons. Believest thou that I am able to do this? says the Saviour to the man who looked to Him for a miraculous cure; and according to his faith so was it done unto him. The apostle Paul looked upon another man under disease, and perceived that he had faith to be healed. Peter affirmed of the cripple whom he restored to the use of his limbs in the temple, that the name of Christ through faith in His name had made this man strong—yea the faith which is by Him, had given him this perfect soundness in the presence of them all. And thus do we recover our spiritual health. And thus are the blindness and the paralysis and the impotency that have so benumbed our moral faculties done away. The

full and firm persuasion of the patriarch, that what is impossible with man is possible with God, will bring down this possibility in living demonstration upon our own characters. He who promises also says, that for this I must be enquired after; and the prayer of faith brings down the fulfilment; and the man who asks for what is so consonant to the will of God, as that he shall be made alive unto Himself, has only like Abraham to believe Him able to call from the womb of nonentity that power into being, by which he is made a new creature in Jesus Christ our Lord. A creature from the depths of his conscious depravity, thus knocking at the door which he cannot open, but who believes that one is standing there to hear and to answer him—a humble aspirant after the character of heaven, who prays in faith for the love to God which he has never yet felt, and for the charity to man with which he has vainly tried to animate his own cold and selfish bosom—the labouring disciple of revelation, whose ear has taken up the promise of our eternal inheritance, but who knows that it is only through the medium of a birth in his own heart as preternatural as that of Isaac that he ever can arrive at it—Let him imitate the father of the faithful in his confident reliance on the promise of God; and like him let him believe in the power that quickeneth from above; and like him who was not weak in faith, let him consider not the deadness of his own moral and spiritual energies, but give to God the whole glory of the renovation he aspires after—and he will most assuredly experience with all Christians, that when

weak then is he strong, and that what God hath promised He is able also to perform.

But the habit of against hope believing in hope, is not restricted to the great and general promises of Christianity. It extends to all the promises of the book of revelation—to those for example, in which God has condescended even on the passing affairs of our pilgrimage in this world; and affirmed that He will not leave us destitute of such things as are needful for the body; and hath admonished us to cast this care upon Him, on the assurance of daily bread to us and our little ones. Amid the reelings of this eventual period,[1] we doubt not that the aspect of the times has borne upon it a hard and a lowring expression towards many a family; and that, standing on the eve of a fearful descent into the abyss of poverty, great has been the distress and great has been the disquietude; and that while the present and the visible dependence was fast melting away, and every successive arrival had for months together called to the ear of the mercantile world a still more dismal futurity that was coming—many have been the hearts among you that were failing for fear, and to the eye of nature was it against all hope, that you ever could be borne through the dark spaces of uncertainty that lay before you. And yet even here the Christian has ground against hope to believe in hope. The promise of daily bread is to him and to his children. Let him but have the faith

[1] In 1820—when commercial distress, and political discontent, threatened a violent outbreaking in the manufacturing districts of the West of Scotland.

of the patriarch, and he will not be afraid of evil tidings; and while there be others, who, in the rush of a great commercial storm, are melted in their soul because of trouble; and reel to and fro, and stagger like a drunken man, and are at their wits' end—he believeth and is calm, and at length finds himself in the desired haven. And we appeal to this worst of seasons; we appeal to a period from the crash and the turbulence and the fearful despondency of which we are yet scarcely emerging—when society has been heaving under the burden of a commerce greater than it can bear, and the surfeited and overladen world has been rolling back upon its authors the produce of their own frenzied speculations—when the proudest of our great trading establishments have toppled to an overthrow, and strewed the face of an ocean that is still labouring with the ruins and the fragments of shipwrecked ambition—We are confident that even in the very midst of such a history as this, there is not a house we can enter, nor a family from which we can obtain the record of all their vicissitudes and all their vexations, where we shall not find a trophy of the faithfulness of God—where up to the extent of His own engagement, which are what things we absolutely stand in need of—and why care we for the rest?—He has not ministered subsistence and safety to all who put their trust in Him. So that here is an ever recurring topic for the exercise of faith; and in behalf of God do we affirm, even in the unlikeliest and most threatening of all periods, that as the faith so will be the fulfilment.

And upon this very theme of our present remarks, does the offering up of Isaac admit of a most powerful and pertinent application. It was through him, that Abraham saw afar off the glory that was promised; and yet him was he required by God to sacrifice with his own hands; and, even against hope believing in hope, he proceeded to render an unfaltering compliance with the order; and while he made full proof of his obedience on the one hand, did God on the other make full proof of His faithfulness. There is a time when adversity brings a man so low, as to strip him of more than his all; and when it places him before the tribunal of his assembled creditors; and when justice bids a faithful account and a full surrender of all that belongs to him; and when nevertheless, by an act of dexterous and unseen appropriation, he may retain a something with which he links the future revival of his business, or the future subsistence of his family. Now this is his appointed sacrifice. This, in despite of all fond anticipation in behalf of his prospects, and of all relentings on behalf of his children, it is his duty to give up. His business is to discharge himself of every item of God's will, and to embark himself with full reliance on God's promises. This is the trial both of his integrity and of his faith; and on the altar of truth it is his part to deposit an entire offering, and to bring forward every secret and untold article to the light of an open manifestation. This we would call the triumph of faith over vision, and of trust in God over the apprehensions of nature; and the unseen witness, who all the while is most intently looking

on, can out of the infinity of resources which He has at command, again bring sufficiency to his door—can at least fill him with that peace of contentment, which with godliness is great gain; and bless with the light of His approving countenance that humbler walk to which he has descended—can throw a sweetness and a shelter around him that perhaps he never felt in the loftier exposures of society; and irradiate his more modest and homely dwelling place, with a hope that beams beyond the grave, and soars above all the changes of this fleeting and uncertain pilgrimage.

There is still another lesson that remains to be drawn and enforced from the example of Abraham, beside the strength of his faith; and that is the practical movement which it imprest upon him. To be the children of him who is called the father of the faithful, it is not enough that we imitate him in the principle of his faith—we must also, according to the language of the apostle, walk in the footsteps of it. It is very true that it was the belief of Abraham which was counted to him for righteousness.) He believed what the Lord had spoken; and had there not been another communication to him from Heaven, than simply that he was to have a son through whom all the families of the earth were to be blessed, we can conceive a firm persuasion of the truth of this announcement, resting in the mind of the patriarch, without stimulating him to one deed or to one movement in consequence. It might have found ingress there, and taken up a most inviolable lodgment in his heart, and he be reckoned with as righteous because of it;

and yet he may have occupied the very station, and lived the very life that he would have done, though no such message had ever come to his door, and no such promise had ever been addrest to him. But, instead of this, we find that his faith in the heavenly visitation was instantly followed up by a change in the whole course and habit of his pilgrimage; and a painful abandonment of all that was naturally dear to his heart was the very first fruit of it; and he forthwith put himself under a control which maintained an authoritative guidance over the whole of his future history; and in the full attitude of service and subordination, did he wait the bidding of that master's voice, who prescribed to him the conduct of all his journeyings through the world, and often laid upon him the most arduous tasks of obedience: And nothing can be more completely passive and resigned, than the posture of him who has been styled the father of all who do believe—in that, when the commandment came forth upon him from God, he never once imagined that there was any thing else for him to act in the affair, but just to render an instantaneous compliance therewith. We have heard belief and obedience contrasted the one with the other, and in such a way as if these two terms stood in practical opposition. In the case of Abraham we see them standing in sure and immediate succession, so that the one emanated from the other; and just in proportion to the strength of his faith, and to the glory which he rendered unto God for His faithfulness, and to the unstaggering reliance that he had upon His assurances, and to the thoroughness of his per-

suasion that what God had promised He was able also to perform—just in that very proportion, did he commit himself to the authority of God; and amid all the uncertainties incident to one who was going he knew not whither, did he take counsel and direction from Him who was his master in heaven; and nothing can be more evident than that character of devotedness to the whole will of God which stood imprest on the subsequent doings of his life upon earth; and, instead of a mere contemplative persuasion with which he looked forward to the country that was promised to him, did he shape his measures with all the preparation and activity of a man who had been set upon the enterprise of travelling towards it. So that faith, instead of lulling him out of his activity, was the very principle which both set it agoing and kept it agoing. It was the moving force which first tore him away from those scenes and from that society to which nature so adhesively cleaves; and after he had been loosed from all that was dear to him, did the same force act upon him with that continued impulse, which made him just as exemplary for his works of obedience as he was for the strength and determination of his faith. It is most true, as Paul says to the Romans, that by faith Abraham was justified, and not by *obedience*. But it is just as true what he says to the Hebrews, that it was by faith that Abraham *obeyed*—when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance; and he went out not knowing whither he went. By faith, he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling

in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise. For he looked for a city which hath foundations whose builder and maker is God. And he walked as a stranger and pilgrim upon earth, and declared plainly that he had gone forth in quest of a country.

The truth is, that God did not confine His utterance with Abraham to a bare promise, on the truth of which it was his part to rely. The very first utterance that is recorded was a precept, on the authority of which it was his part to proceed. "Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred and from thy father's house, into a land that I will show thee." It is very true that ere he would obey there was something to believe. He had to believe that it was God who spake unto him. He must have believed in the land of which he had been told. He must have believed in the truth of the promise, that came immediately on the back of the commandment. He must, in fact, have given an entire and unexcepted glory to the truth of God—and must therefore have had a faith reaching to the whole extent of God's testimony. Had God simply said "I will make of thee a great nation," the belief of such an announcement did not essentially lead to any movement on the part of our patriarch. But when God said—"Get thee out of thy country, and I will make of thee a great nation"—the belief of the announcement, extended in this manner, would lead Abraham to perceive, that the act of his leaving home was just as essential to the fulfilling of it, as the act of his becoming a great nation was essential. And the joy he

felt in the latter part of the communication, would just be in proportion to the prompt obedience that he rendered to the former part of it. It was his faith in the first address of God to him, that led him to the first step of his obedience; and it was his faith in God's future addresses, where precepts and promises are intermingled together, that led him on to future steps of obedience: And it is just by walking in the same path of obedience that he did, that we walk in the footsteps of the faith of our father Abraham. An article of belief may lie up in our minds, without any change or any transition; and such a belief can have no footsteps. But when it is a belief that carries movement along with it—when it is a belief in one who both bids and blesses with His voice at the same time—when it is a belief that is conversant with such an utterance as the following—"Arise, walk through the land in the length and in the breadth of it: for I will give it unto thee;" or with such an utterance as the following—"I am the Almighty God; walk before me and be thou perfect, and I will make my covenant between me and thee, and will multiply thee exceedingly"—when it is belief in a God who so manages his intercourse with His creatures, as to cheer them by His promises, and guide them by His directions at the same instant—there is a dependence that will issue from such a faith, but there is an obedience also; and the successive parts of that practical history which it originated at the first, and animates throughout afterwards, are the footsteps of the faith.

LECTURE XVI.

ROMANS, iv, 23—25.

"Now it was not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed to him; but for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead; who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification."

These things were written for our admonition on whom the latter ends of the world have come. The circumstance of Abraham's faith being proposed as an example to us, should bring up our confidence to the same pitch of boldness and determination which are ascribed to his in the preceding verses. He against hope believed in hope; that is, he trusted in the face of unlikelihood. So ought we, however unlikely it is to the eye of nature, that sinners should be taken into friendship with that God whose holiness is at irreconcilable variance with sin. We just do as Abraham did before us, when we rest and rely upon God's friendship to us in Christ Jesus; and that simply on the ground that we judge Him to be faithful who has promised. It ought to encourage our faith, when we read of him who was the father of the faithful, staggering not at the promise of God through unbelief, but being strong in faith, and thereby glorifying God by his persuasion that what He had promised He was able also to perform. When we read that it was this very resolute and unfaltering reliance on the part of Abraham, which

God counted to him for righteousness; and that the same faith upon our part will bring down upon us the benefit of a like imputation—this ought to overrule the fears of guilt. It should rebuke all our doubts and apprehensions away from us. It should rivet our souls on this sure foundation, that God hath said it, and shall He not perform it? It should clear away the lowring imagery of terror and distrust from the sinner's agitated bosom: And if the most characteristic peculiarity in the belief of Abraham was, that it was belief in the midst of staggering and appalling improbabilities—should not this just stimulate to the same belief the spirit of him, who, feeling that by nature he is in the hands of a God in whose sacred breast there exists a jealousy of all that is evil, is apt to view with incredulity the approaches of the same God when He proffers reconciliation even to the worst and most worthless offenders; and protests in their hearing, that, if they will only draw nigh in the name of Christ, He will forgive all and forget all?

Ver. 25. The circumstance that is singled out in this passage as the object of the faith of Christians, is that of God having raised up Jesus from the dead. In other parts of the Bible the resurrection of the Saviour is stated to be the act of God the Father; and, however much the import of this may have escaped the notice of an ordinary reader, it is pregnant with meaning of the weightiest importance. You know that when the prison door is opened to a criminal, and that by the very authority which lodged him there, it evinces that the

debt of his transgression has been rendered; and that he now stands acquitted of all its penalties. It was not for His own but for our offences that Jesus was delivered unto the death, and that His body was consigned to the imprisonment of the grave. And when an angel descended from heaven and rolled back the great stone from the door of the sepulchre, this speaks to us that the justice of God is satisfied, that the ransom of our iniquities has been paid, that Christ has rendered a full discharge of all that debt for which he undertook as the great Surety between God and the sinners who believe in Him. And could we only humble you into the conviction that you need the benefit of such a redeeming process—could we only show you to yourselves as the helpless transgressors of a commandment that cannot be trampled on with impunity—could we thoroughly impress you with the principle that God is not to be mocked, and that the sanctions of that moral government which He wields over the universe He has thrown around Him are not to be treated as things of no significancy—could we reveal to you your true situation as the subjects of a law, that still pursues you with its exactions, while it demands reparation for all the indignities it has gotten at your hands—Then would the topics which we are now attempting so feebly to illustrate; and which many regard as the jargon of a scholastic theology that is now exploded, rise in all the characters of reality and truth before the eye of your now enlightened conscience; and gladly would you devolve the burden of your guilt on the head of the accepted sacrifice, that you

may be rescued from the condemnation of those offences for which He was delivered, that you may be lightened of all that fearful endurance which He has borne.

'And raised again for our justification.' We are not fond of that repulsive air which has doubtless been thrown around Christianity, by what some would call the barbarous terms and distinctions of schoolmen. But it will, we think, help to illustrate the truth of the matter before us, that we shortly advert to the theological phrases of a negative and positive justification. The former consists of an acquittal from guilt. By the latter a title is conferred to the reward of righteousness. There are two ways in which God may deal with you—either as a criminal in the way of vengeance, or as a loyal and obedient subject in the way of reward. By your negative justification, you simply attain to the midway position of God letting you alone. He does not lay upon you the hand of retribution for your evil deeds; but neither does He lay upon you the hand of retribution for any good deeds. You are kept out of hell, the place of penal suffering for the vicious. But you are not preferred to heaven, the place of awarded glory and happiness for the virtuous. Now the conception is, that the Saviour accomplished our negative justification by bearing upon His own person the chastisement of our sins —He was delivered for our offences unto the death. But that to achieve our positive justification, He did more than suffer, He obeyed. He accumulated as it were a stock of righteousness, out of which He lavishes reward on those whom He had before

redeemed from punishment. It was because He finished a great work that God highly exalted Him; and from the place which He now occupies does He shed on His disciples a foretaste of heaven here, as the earnest and the preparation for their inheritance hereafter. He does something more than work out their deliverance from the place of torment, and thus bring them to the neutral and intermediate state of those who are merely forgiven. He pours upon them spiritual blessings; and, by stamping upon them a celestial character, does He usher them even now into celestial joy—so as that, with their affections set upon things above, they may already be said to dwell in heavenly places with Christ Jesus our Lord: And thus while it was by His death, that He delivered them from the guilt of their offences—it is by His rising again that He obtained for them the rewards of righteousness, the privileges of a completed justification.

And here we may remark, that by the simple bestowment of holiness upon His people, does He in fact infuse into their spirits the great and essential element of heaven's blessedness. It is a mistake to think, that it is either the splendour or the music of paradise, which makes it a place of rejoicing. It is because righteousness will flourish there, that rapture will be felt there. It is because heaven is the abode of purity, that it is also an abode of peace and pleasantness. It is because every heart thrills with benevolence, that in every heart there is beatitude unspeakable. It is love to God that calls forth halleluiahs of ecstacy which ring eternally in heaven. In a word, it is not an animal

but a spiritual festival, which is preparing for us in the mansions above; and in these mansions below, a foretaste is felt by those, who, through patient continuance in well-doing, seek for glory and immortality and honour. The real disciples of the Saviour on earth, can testify, that if they had holiness enough they would have happiness enough; and a still more affecting testimony to the truth, that the atmosphere of goodness is of itself an atmosphere of gladness and of light, may be seen in the mental wretchedness of those who mourn some deadly overthrow from that purity of heart which at one time guarded and adorned them—who have fallen from peace, and that simply because they have fallen from principle—and feel in their bosoms the agonies of hell, and that without another instrument of vengeance to pursue them than a sense of their own native and inherent worthlessness.

The following is the paraphrase of this short passage.

'Now it was not for the mere sake of Abraham that righteousness was reckoned to him because of his faith—but for us also to whom it shall be reckoned, if we believe on Him who raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead—who was delivered up unto the death as an atonement for our offences; and was then raised that He might confer upon us the fruits of His own achievement, the rewards of His own obedience.'

We have little more than time to remark that the faith of Christians, is as little an inert or merely speculative principle, as the faith of Abraham—that it is followed up by a practical movement just

as his was, and has its footsteps just as his had—that if the outset of his was marked by a violent separation from all the habits and attachments of nature, the outset of ours is marked by a separation from our old tastes and our old tendencies in every way as violent—that if in the progress of his he had to obey the requirement which laid upon him the sacrifice of his dearest possessions upon earth, in the progress of ours we may be called upon to cut off a right hand or to pluck out a right eye—that if he was bidden to wander afar from the scenes of his infancy, and to abandon all the endearments of his wonted society; so also we, without having to describe one mile of locomotion, are bidden to enter upon a new spiritual region, and by so doing, to be deserted by the congeniality and approbation of all our ungodly friends and all our worldly companionships. In a word, the faith of Christianity, like the faith of the patriarch, is not a mere metaphysical notion—neither are the blessings of Christianity a reward for the soundness of it. The faith both of the one and of the other is just such a practical sense of the reality of unseen and eternal things, as leads us to go in actual request of them according to a prescribed course; and, in so doing, to renounce present things whatever be the force and whatever be the urgency of their allurements. The faith that was in the patriarch's heart, originated such doings in the history of his life, as declared plainly that he sought a country. And our faith is nothing, it is but the breath of an empty profession, but the utterance of a worthless orthodoxy, if it be not followed up by such measures and

such movements as plainly declare that immortality is the goal to which we are tending—that the world is but the narrow foreground of that perspective which is lying at our feet — and, with the eye stretching forward to the magnificent region beyond it, that we are actually keeping on the straight but single path which conducts to this distant heaven, though set at every footstep with thorns, and hemmed on the right and on the left with difficulties innumerable.

Go forth with this text upon actual society, and make a survey of that mighty throng that move upon our streets, and frequent in thousands our market places—behold every individual in the busy and anxious pursuit of some object which lies in the distance away from him—meet him at any one hour of his history, and ascertain if possible whether the thing on which his heart is lavishing all its desirousness be placed on this or on the other side of death: And if, in every instance, the character of the occupation shall plainly declare that the region of sense which is near engrosses every feeling, and that the region of spirit which is distant is not in all his thoughts—then, if faith, instead of a barren dogma, be indeed the substance of things hoped for and the evidence of things not seen—on this very day might not the question and complaint of our Saviour be preferred, "verily when the Son of man cometh shall he find faith upon the earth?"

It just occurs to us before we are done, that we may gather from the history of Abraham, and that by no very circuitous process of inference, the efficacy of affliction in promoting the conversion of a soul to God. For any thing that appears, he, at

the call of Heaven, left a happy home, and a smiling circle of relationship, and a prosperous establishment, and a neighbourhood that esteemed him. This added to the violence of the separation. But conceive that, previous to the call, his family had been wrested from him by death; or that his wealth had gone by misfortune into dissipation; or that that most grievous of all misfortunes had befallen him, he had incurred disgrace by some violent departure from rectitude—then the ties which bound him to the place of his nativity had been broken; and, instead of a painful banishment, he would have felt it as a refuge and a hiding place to have gone a solitary wanderer from the place of his nativity. And in like manner may affliction loosen even now the bonds that attach us to the world; and that love of it which is opposite to the love of the Father, may receive a death-blow from some great and unlooked-for calamity; and the heart, bereaved of all its wonted objects, may now gladly close with the solicitations of that voice which speaketh from heaven, and would woo us to the abiding glories of eternity; and we may now find it easier to give up our disengaged attachments unto God—seeing that it has pleased Him, by the infliction of His chastening hand, to sever away from them all those objects on which they wont so fondly to expatiate; and thus it is, that, from the awful visitations of death or poverty or any other dreadful overthrow from some eminence which at one time was occupied, there may at length, after a dark and brooding period of many agitations, emerge the light of newborn prospects; there may at length spring up the peaceable fruit of of righteousness.

LECTURE XVII.

ROMANS, v, 1, 2.

"Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: by whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God."

To be justified here, is not to be made righteous, but to be counted righteous. To be justified by faith, expresses to us the way in which an imputed righteousness is made ours. Faith is that act of the recipient, by which he lays hold of this privilege. It contributes no more to the merit that is reckoned to us, than the hand of the beggar adds any portion to the alms that are conferred upon him. When we look to the righteousness that is made ours by faith, it is well to go altogether out of ourselves, and not to mix up any one personal ingredient whether of obeying or of believing with it. The imagination of a merit in faith, brings us back to legal ground again, and exposes us to legal distrust and disquietude. In the exercise of faith, the believer's eye looks out on a cheering and a comforting spectacle; and from the object of its external contemplation, does it fetch homeward all the encouragement which it is fitted to convey. In a former verse of this epistle, we are said to be justified by grace. It was in love to the world, that the whole scheme of another righteousness was devised, and executed, and offered

to man as his plea both of acquittal and of reward before the God whom he had offended. In another place of the New Testament, we read of being justified by Christ—even by Him who brought in that righteousness which is unto all, and upon all who believe. One should look out to that which forms the ground and the matter of our justification; and when we read here that we are justified by faith, one should understand that faith is simply the instrument by which we lay hold of this great privilege—not the light itself, but the window through which it passes—the channel of transmission upon our persons, by which there is attached to them the merit of the righteousness which another has wrought, and of the obedience which another has rendered.

'We have peace with God.' There are two senses in which this expression may be understood. It may signify that peace which is brought about by a transition in the mind of the Godhead, and in virtue of which He is appeased towards us. He ceases from that wrath against the sinner, which only abideth on those who believe not; and from an enemy, He, in consideration of a righteousness which He lays to our account after we have accepted it by faith, becometh a friend. Or it may signify that state which is brought about by a transition in our minds; and in virtue of which we cease from our apprehension of God's wrath against us—not, we think, a dissolving of our enmity against Him, but a subsiding of our terrors because of Him—rest from the agitations of conscious guilt, now washed away—rest from the forebodings of antici-

pated vengeance, now borne by Him on whom the chastisement of our peace was laid. This we conceive to be the true meaning of peace with God in the verse before us. The whole passage, for several verses, looks to be a narrative of the personal experience of believers—of their rejoicing, and of their hoping, and of their glorying. The subject of the peace that is spoken of in this verse is the mind of believers—a peace felt by them, no doubt, because they now judge that God is pacified towards them; but still a peace, the proper residence of which is in their own bosoms, that now have ceased from their fears of the Lawgiver, and are at rest.

Peace in this sense of it then, being the effect of faith, affords a test for the reality of this latter principle. Some perhaps may think that this could be still more directly ascertained, if instead of looking at the test, we looked immediately to the principle itself. By casting an immediate regard upon one's own bosom, we may learn whether peace is there or not. But by casting the same inward regard, might not we directly learn whether faith is there or not? If it be as competent for the eye of consciousness to discern the faith that is in the mind, as to discern there the peace that is but the effect of faith—might not we, without having recourse to marks or evidences at all, just lay as it were our immediate finding upon the principle that we want to ascertain; and come at once to the assurance that faith is in me, because I am conscious it is in me?

Now let it be remarked, that there are certain states and habitudes of the soul, which are far more

palpable than others to the eye of conscience—certain affections, which give a far more powerful intimation of their presence, and can therefore be much more easily and immediately recognized—certain feelings of so fresh and sensible a character, that almost no power of self-examination is required to ascertain the existence of them. I could much more readily, for example, find an answer to the question, what the emotions of my heart are, if there be any depth or tenderness in them at all, than I could answer the question what the notions of my understanding are; and whether they amount to a belief, or stop short at a mere imagination. A state or a process of the intellect, is far more apt to elude the inward discernment of man, than a state or a process of sensible impression, which announces its own reality to him in spite of himself. And thus it is, that it may be a very difficult thing to find whether faith be in me, by taking a direct look at the state of the understanding—while it may not be difficult to find, whether peace be in me, or love be in me, or a principle of zealous obedience be in me—all of these making themselves known, as it were, by the touch of a distinct and vigorous sensation. And hence the test of the principle may be far more readily come at than the principle itself. The foliage and the blossoms may stand more obviously revealed to the eye of the inner man, than the germ from which they originate; and what our Saviour says of His followers is true of the faith by which they are actuated, that by its fruits ye shall know it.

And as to the peace of our text, which is stated

there to be a consequence of faith—it surely cannot be denied, but by those who never felt what the remorse and the restlessness and the other raging elements of a sinner's bosom are, that the consequence is far more obvious than the cause. The mind that has been tost and tempest-driven by the pursuing sense of its own worthlessness, should ever these unhappy agitations sink into a calm, will surely feel the transition and instantly recognize it. When an outward storm has spent its fury, and the last breath of it has died away into silence, the ear cannot be more sensible of the difference—than the inner man is, when the wild war of turbulence and disorder in his own heart, is at length wrought off to its final termination. The man may grope for ever among the dark and brooding imagery of his own spirit, and never once be able to detect there that principle of faith, which may tell him that though he suffers now he will be safe in eternity. But should this unseen visitor actually enter within him, and work the effect that is here ascribed to it, and put an end to that sore vengeance of discipline with which God had exercised him, and again restore the light of that countenance which either looked to him in wrath or was mantled in darkness—should he now feel at peace from those terrors that so recently had made him afraid; and the God that lowred judgment upon his soul, now put on a face of benignity, and bid this unhappy outcast again look up to Him and rejoice—should the guilt which so agonized him be sprinkled over with the blood of atonement, and he again be translated into the sunshine of conscious

acceptance with the Being whose chastening hand had well nigh overwhelmed him—We repeat it, that though faith in itself may elude the exploring eye of him, who finds the search that he is making through the recesses of his moral constitution to be not more fatiguing than it is fruitless—yet faith as the harbinger of peace may manifest at once its reality, by an effect so powerful and so precious.

This may serve perhaps to illustrate the right attitude for a penitent in quest of comfort, under the burden of convictions which distress or terrify him. He may at length fetch it from without—but he never will fetch it primarily or directly from within. The children of Israel might have as soon been healed by looking downwardly upon their wounds, rather than upwardly to the brazen serpent, as the conscience-stricken sinner will find relief from any one object that can meet his eye, in that abyss of darkness and distemper to which he has turned his own labouring bosom. He is where he ought to be, when lying low in the depths of humiliation; but never will he attain to rest or to recovery, till led to the psalmist's prayer—"Out of the depths do I cry unto thee, O Lord." It is not from the trouble that is below, but from the truth that is above, that he will catch the sunbeam which is to gladden and to revive him. It is not by looking to himself, but by looking unto Jesus; and that peace with God which he never can arrive at through the medium of so dark a contemplation as his own character—that peace the tidings of which he never will read, among the lineaments of his own turpitude and deformity—

the peace to which no exercise of penitential feeling, though prolonged in sorrow and bitterness to the end of his days, will ever of itself conduct him —the peace with God, which, through himself or through any penance of his own inflicting, he never will secure, can only come in sure and abundant visitation upon his heart, through the channel of our text, when it is peace with God through Jesus Christ our Lord.

"Look unto me, all ye ends of the earth, and be saved." "Like as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of man be lifted up; that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life." "God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in the hearts of those who believe, to give them the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ; and they who believe not and are lost, are blinded by the god of this world, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them."

Ver. 2. The single word *also* may convince us, that the privilege spoken of in the second verse, is distinct from and additional to the privilege spoken of in the first. The grace wherein we stand is something more than peace with God. We understand it to signify God's positive kindness or favour to us. You may have no wrath against a man, whom at the same time you have no feeling of positive good-will to. You are at peace with him, though not in friendship with him. It is a great deal that God ceases to be offended with us, and is now to inflict upon us no penalty. But it is still

more that God should become pleased with us, and is now to pour blessings upon our heads. It is a mighty deliverance to our own feelings, when our apprehensions are quieted; and we have nothing to fear. But it is a still higher condition to be preferred to, when our hopes are awakened; and we rejoice in the sense of God's regard to us now, and in the prospect of His glory hereafter. It is additional to our peace in believing, that we also have joy in believing. There is something here that will remind you of what has been already said of negative and positive justification. It was in dying, that Christ pacified the Lawgiver. It was in rising again, that He obtained, as the reward of His obedience, the favour of God, in behalf of all those for whom He now liveth to make intercession, and from these two verses, the distincton to which we have already adverted receives another illustration.

The following is a paraphrase of these two verses.

'Therefore having righteousness laid to our account because we have faith, we enjoy peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. By whom also it is that we have obtained admittance through our faith, into that state of favour with God wherein we stand here, and rejoice in the hope of His glory hereafter.'

The only remaining topic that occurs to us from this short but comprehensive passage, is that glory of God which is hereafter to be revealed. The apostle Peter speaks of believers being begotten again to a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible and

undefiled and that passeth not away, and is reserved in heaven for those who are kept by the power of God through faith unto a salvation, that is ready to be revealed in the last time. We cannot speak in detail upon a subject that has yet to be revealed. We cannot lift away the veil, from what another apostle tells us is still a mystery, when he says, that it doth not yet appear what we shall be. But we may at least carry our observation to the extent of the partial disclosure made to us by the same apostle, when he says, though "it doth not yet appear what we shall be, yet we know, that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is."

From this we at least gather, that we shall have a direct perception of God. You know how much it is otherwise now—how, though He is not far from any one of us, He is as hidden from all observation as if removed to the distance of infinity away from us—how, though locally He is in us and around us, yet to every purpose of direct and personal fellowship we are as exiles from His presence—how all that is created, though it bear upon it the impress of the Creator's hand, instead of serving to us as a reflection of the Deity, serves as a screen to intercept our discernment of Him. It is not true, that the visible structure of the universe, leads man at least, to trace the image, and to realize the power and operation of that Divinity who reared it. It is not true, that he is conducted upwards, from the agents and the secondary causes that are on every side of him, to that unseen and primary Cause who framed at first the whole of

this wondrous mechanism, and still continues to guide by His unerring wisdom all the movements of it. The world, in fact, is our all; and we do not penetrate beyond it to its animating Spirit; and we do not pierce the canopy that is stretched above it, to the glories of His upper sanctuary. The mind may stir itself up to lay hold of God; but, like a thin and shadowy abstraction, He eludes the grasp of the mind—and the baffled overdone creature is left, without an adequate feeling of that mysterious Being who made and who upholds him. To every unconverted man, creation, instead of illustrating the Deity, has thrown a shroud of obscurity over Him; and even to the eye of a believer, is He seen in dimness and disguise, so that almost all he can do is to long after Him in the world; and, as the hart panteth after the water brooks, so does his soul thirst after the living God. The whole creation groaneth and travaileth, under the sentence of its banishment from Him who gave it birth; and even they who have received the first fruits of the Spirit, do groan within themselves, under the heavy incumbrance that weighs down their souls as they follow hard after the yet unseen Father of them. All they can reach in this nether pilgrimage, is but a glimpse and a foretase of the coming revelation; and as to that glory, which, while in the body, they shall never behold with the eye of vision, they can now only rejoice in the hope of its full and abundant disclosure in the days that are to come.

It were presumptuous, perhaps, to attempt any conception of such a disclosure—when God shall

show Himself personally to man—when the mighty barrier of interception, that is now so opake and impenetrable, shall, at length be moved away—when the great and primitive Father of all, shall at length stand revealed to the eye of creatures rejoicing before Him—when all that design and beauty by which this universe is enriched, shall beam in a direct flood of radiance from the original mind that evolved it into being—when the sight of infinite majesty shall be so tempered by the sight of infinite mercy, that the awe which else would overpower will be sweetened by love into a most calm and solemn and confiding reverence—and the whole family of heaven shall find it to be enough of happiness for ever, that the graces of the Divinity are visibly expanded to their view, and they are admitted into the high delights of ecstatic and ineffable communion with the living God. But it will be the glory of His moral perfections, that will minister the most of high rapture and reward to these children of immortality. It will be the holiness that recoils from every taint of impurity. It will be the cloudless lustre of justice unbroken, and truth unchanged and unchangeable. It will be the unspotted worth and virtue of the Godhead—yet all so blended with a compassion that is infinite, and all so directed by a wisdom that is unsearchable, that by a way of access as wondrous as is the Being who devised it, sinners have entered within the threshold of this upper temple; and, without violation to the character of Him who presides there, have been transported from a region of sin to this region of unsullied sacredness. And

there, seeing Him as He is, do they become altogether like unto Him; and there are they transformed into a character kindred to His own; and there that assimilating process is perfected, by which every creature who is in Paradise, has the image of glory, that shines upon him from the throne, stamped upon his own person; and there each, according to the measure of his capacity, is filled with the worth and beneficence of the Godhead; and there the distinct reward held forth to the candidates for heaven upon earth, is, that they shall see God, and become like unto God — like Him in His hatred of all iniquity, like Him in the love and in the possession of all righteousness.

You will be at no loss now to understand, how it is that he who hath this hope in him, purifieth himself even as God is pure. It is by progress in holiness, in fact, that he is making ground on that alone way which leads and qualifies for heaven. There is no other heaven truly than a heaven of godliness; and by every wilful sin that is committed, does man lose so much of distance from the promised reward, and puts himself more hoplessly away from it. You will see by this that faith in the gospel and a deliberate following after sin, is a contradiction in terms. The very road to heaven is a road of conformity to the will, and of unceasing approximation to the resemblance of the Godhead. The great object of the dispensation we sit under, is to be restored to His forfeited image, and to be reinstated in all the graces of the character that we have lost. The atonement by Christ is nothing—justification by faith is nothing—the assump-

tion of an orthodox phraseology is nothing—unless they have formed a gate of introduction to that arena, on which the Christian must fight his way to a heavenly character, and so be created anew in righteousness and true holiness. Every sin throws him aback on the ground that he is travelling; and often throws him aback so fearfully, that, if he feels as he ought, he will tremble lest he has been thrown off from the ground altogether—lest the sore retrogression that he has made from all holiness, has made him an outcast from all hope—lest by putting a good conscience away from him, he has made shipwreck of faith: And never will the irreconcilable variance between salvation and sin, come home to his experience in more sure and practical demonstration, than when sin has thrown him adrift from all the securities which held him; and, through a lengthened season of abandonment and distress, he can find no comfort in the word, and catch no smile from the upper sanctuary, and hear no whisper of mercy from God's returning Spirit, and feel no happiness and no hope in the Saviour.

The same doctrine receives a more pleasing illustration from the bright side of the picture. To ascertain the kind of happiness that is in heaven, the best way is to observe the happiness of a good man upon earth. You will find it to consist essentially in those pleasures of the heart, which the love and the service of God bring along with it—in a sense of the divine favour, beaming upon him from above; and in the fresh and perpetual feast of an approving conscience within—in the possession

of a sound and a well-poised mind, prepared for the attack of every temptation, and with all its ready powers at command, on the intimation of every coming danger—in the triumph of those noble and new-born energies by which he can clear the ascending way of a progressive holiness, through all those besetting urgencies that are found to entangle and to discomfit other men—and, above all, in those hours of sweet and solemn rapture, by which he diversifies a walk unspotted in the world, with the lofty devotion of his occasional retirements away from it. Who shall say that righteousness is not the road to a believer's heaven, when it is righteousness, and that alone, which gives its breath and its being to all the ecstacy that abounds in it? Or who shall say that the grace in which he is taught to rejoice, encourages to sin, when it is sin that wrests every foretaste of the coming blessedness from his soul; and darkens, if not to utter and irrecoverable extinction at least for a period of deep and dreadful endurance, all his prospects of enjoying it?

We shall conclude with offering you an actual specimen of heaven upon earth, as enjoyed for a season of devotional contemplation on the word of God; and it may afford you some conception of the kind of happiness that is current there. "And now," says the good Bishop Horne after he had finished his commentary on the Psalms, and had held many a precious hour of converse with God and with the things that are above when meditating thereon—"And now, could the author flatter himself, that any one would take half the pleasure

in reading the following exposition, which he hath taken in writing it, he would not fear the loss of his labour. The employment detached him from the bustle and hurry of life, the din of politics and the noise of folly; vanity and vexation, flew away for a season, care and disquietude came not near his dwelling. He arose fresh as the morning to his task; the silence of the night invited him to pursue it; and he can truly say that food and rest were not preferred before it. Every psalm improved infinitely upon his acquaintance with it, and no one gave him uneasiness but the last; for then he grieved that his work was done. Happier hours than those which have been spent in these meditations on the songs of Zion, he never expects to see in this world. Very pleasantly did they pass, and moved smoothly and swiftly along; for when thus engaged he counted no time. They are gone, but have left a relish and a fragrance upon the mind, and the remembrance of them is sweet."

May every sabbath you shall spend upon earth, bring down such a glimpse of heaven's glory and heaven's blessedness upon your habitations. No care; no poverty; no desolation, by the hand of death upon your household; no evil, saving remorse, that the world can oppose, need to keep such precious visitations away from you. But O remember that it is only to those who keep the sayings of the Saviour, that He has promised thus to manifest Himself; and it is only after a pure and watchful and conscientious week, that you can ever expect its closing sabbath to be a season of rejoicing piety, a day of peace and of pleasantness.

LECTURE XVIII.

ROMANS, v, 3—5.

"And not only so, but we glory in tribulation also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope: and hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost, which is given unto us."

The apostle had before said, that we rejoice in hope of the glory of God; and he now says, that we glory in tribulation also. This impresses the idea of the great opposition that obtains, between an appetite for spiritual and an appetite for temporal blessings. To rejoice in hope of the one is a habit of the same bosom, that rejoices and glories in the loss or destruction of the other—not however that the ruin of any present good is desirable on its own account, for all such affliction is not joyous but rather grievous; but still upon the whole should it be matter of gladness, if the short affliction that is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; and if afterwards it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who are exercised thereby.

'Tribulation worketh patience.' You will observe that the word translated patience, is of a more active quality in the original than it is according to our customary acceptation of it. We understand it to be a mere virtue of sufferance, the passive property of enduring without complaint and

without restlessness. But it really extends to something more than this. The same word has been translated "patient continuance," in that verse where the apostle speaks of a patient continuance in well-doing. The word perseverance, in fact, is a much nearer and more faithful rendering of the original than the word patience, "Let us run with patience the race set before us," says the apostle, in our present translation. Let us run with perseverance the race set before us, were an improvement upon the sense of this passage. We wait with patience, or sit still with patience, or simply suffer with patience; but surely we run not with patience but with perseverance. It is well when tribulation is met with uncomplaining acquiescence, or met with patience—but it is still better when it not only composes to resignation, but stimulates to a right and religious course of activity. "It is good for me to have been afflicted," says the psalmist, "that I might learn thy law." "Before I was afflicted I went astray; but now have I kept thy word." It is very well when affliction is submitted to without a murmur—but better still when it quickens the believer's pace in the divine life, and causes him to emerge on a purer and loftier career of sanctification than before.

We conceive the main explanation of an afflicting process upon the heart to lie in this, that the heart must have an object on which to fasten its hopes or its regards; that if this object be reft from it, a painful void is created in the bosom, the painfulness of which is not done away till the void be replaced; that the soreness of such a visi-

tation therefore, as say the loss of a child, inflicted upon a worldly man, will at length find its relief and its medicine in worldly objects; and that in the succession of company, or in the intense prosecution of business, or in the variety of travelling, or in the relapse of his feelings again to the tone of his ordinary pursuits and ordinary habits, time will at length fill up the vacancy and cause him to forget the anguish of his present tribulation. But if, instead of worldly he be spiritual, he will seek for comfort from another quarter of contemplation —he will try to fill up the desolate place in his heart with other objects—he will turn him to God, and labour after a fuller impression of that enduring light and love and beneficence, which, if they only shine upon him in clearer manifestation, would effectually chase away the darkness of his incumbent melancholy. In such circumstances, and with such feelings, prayer will be his refuge; communion with God will be the frequent endeavour of his soul; he will try to people the vacancy created in his bosom by the loss of earthly things, with the imagery of heaven; he will heave up, as it were, his affections, now disengaged with that which wont to delight and to occupy them, but is now torn away; he will, in the stirrings of his agitated spirit, attempt to lift them to that serene and holy and beautiful sanctuary, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God. And who does not see that he has now more of heart to give to these things, delivered as it is from the engrossment of a fond and favourite affection; and that, as the fruit of these repeated attempts to follow hard after

God, he may at length obtain a nearer approximation; and that, on the singleness of his intent and undivided desires, a light may be made to shine, which will disclose to him with far more clear and affecting impression, those great realities which are above and everlasting; and that with his faith so strengthened, and his separation from the world so widened and confirmed, and all the wishes of his heart so transferred from the earth that has deceived him to the inheritance that fadeth not away —Who does not see, that the afflicting process which the man has undergone, has transformed him into a more ethereal being than before; has loosened him from time, and rivetted him with greater tenacity and determination than ever to the pursuits of eternity; has forced him as it were to seek his resources from above, and thus brought him to abide by the fountain of living waters; has riven him, as it were, from the world, and left him free to attach his loosened regards to the invisibles which stand at a distance away from him—So that now he can fill up his heart with heaven as his future home, and fill up his time with the service and the occupations of that holiness which is the way that leads to it?

You know that in the parable of the sower, the deceitfulness of riches is a thorn which occupies the room, and overbears the influence upon the heart, of the word of God. But you also know that the cares of life are also thorns. It is therefore a very possible thing, that, by the tribulation of sudden poverty, one set of thorns may just be exchanged for another; and that by the rumina-

tions and the anxieties and the absorbing thoughtfulness which the ruin of fortune brings in its rear, the things of heaven may as effectually be elbowed out of the place which belongs to them, as by all the splendours of affluence and all its fascinations. The only sorrow which such a reverse inflicts upon the bosom of the sufferer, may be the sorrow of this world that worketh death. Time will show. The experience of the effect on the man's personal character and history, will demonstrate, whether the root of the matter be in him; and if he really be that believer on whom tribulation worketh patience, and patience such an experience of himself as will be a ground of hopefulness and joy to him. Prune away a branch from a tree that is already dead; and it will not be this operation that will revive it. Prune away some rank and excessive luxuriance from a tree that is living; and you will divert the hurtful flow of its vegetable moisture, from the part where it is running too abundantly, and restore the proper tone and healthfulness to its whole circulation. And the same of man. His affections run sideway among the idols of sense and time that are around him. And God, whose husbandry we are, often, by a severe but salutary operation, severs them away; and so diverts our inclinations from objects to which they cannot excessively tend, without guilt or worldliness; and leads them in one ascending direction to Himself; and if this be the love of God that we keep His commandments, a more faithful walk of holiness and a steadier perseverance in the way of new obedience are the fruits of His chastening visitation.

And thus may you understand, how accordant with human nature the affirmation of our Saviour is, when He speaks of Himself being the true vine, and His Father the husbandman—and then says, "Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away; and every branch that beareth fruit he purgeth it," or as it should have been, "he pruneth it that it may bring forth more fruit."

But though the patience of our text, by being turned into perseverance, is made rather to signify the impulse and direction which calamities are fitted to give to the active principles of our nature—yet we are not to exclude a meek and unresisting endurance of suffering, as one of its most precious fruits on the character of him who is exercised thereby. There is a certain mellowness which affliction sheds upon the character—a softening that it effects of all the rougher and more repulsive asperities of our nature—a delicacy of temperament, into which it often melts and refines the most ungainly spirit—just as when you visit a man, from whose masculine and overbearing manner you wont to recoil, when, in the full flow and loudness and impetuosity of health, he carried all before him; but whom you find to be vastly more amiable, when, after the hand of disease has for a time been upon him, he still retains the meek hue of convalescence. It is not the pride of aspiring talent that we carry to heaven with us. It is not the lustre of a superiority which dazzles and commands and overawes, that we bear with us there. It is not the eminence of any public distinction, or the fame of lofty and successful enter-

prise. And should these give undue confidence to the man, or throw an aspect of conscious and complacent energy over him, he wears not yet the complexion of Paradise; and, should God select him as His own, He will send some special affliction that may chasten him out of all which is uncongenial with the place of blessedness, and at length reduce him to its unmingled love and its adoring humility. Affliction has a kind of physical as well as moral power, in sweetening the character, and in impressing a grace and a gentleness upon it. It is purified by the simple process of passing through the fire. "The fining pot for silver and the furnace for gold," says Solomon; "but the Lord trieth the hearts." "For thou, O God, hast proved us; thou hast tried us as silver." "And when he hath tried me," says Job, "I shall come forth as gold."

But the use of affliction is not merely to better the quality of the soul; it is to prove this quality as it exists—'And patience experience'—It furnishes him with a proof of God's love, in that he has been enabled to stand this trial with principles exalted by it, or at least unimpaired. And it also furnishes him with a proof of his own sincerity. It causes him to know that there is now that in his heart, which can bear him up under the ills of the present life; and stimulate him in the pursuit of life everlasting. It makes him acquainted with the force and the stedfastness of his own character; and if his conscience can attest, that, amid all the pressure and distress of his earthly sufferings, still the matters of faith had the practical

ascendancy of his soul, and made him feel the present affliction to be light, and amply compensated for all its severity;—this is to him a satisfying demonstration that his heart was now occupied and governed by principles which nature never originates, and which never do take possession of a human bosom till they are imparted by grace. This to him is a joyful evidence, not of the truth of the gospel, for that stands upon arguments of its own—but that the gospel had taken effect upon himself, and that he had now come personally under the regimen of that doctrine which is unto salvation.

'And experience hope.' We beg to call your particular attention to the circumstance, that, at an antecedent point in this train of consequences, hope had already been introduced as one of them. Peace was made to emanate from faith, and joy also, and hope also. They who believed no sooner did so, than they rejoiced in hope of the glory of God. But in their progress through the world, they meet with tribulations; and it is said of them that they glory in these also—because of the final result of a process that may have been lengthened out for many days, after faith entered their hearts, and peace and hope sprung up as the direct and immediate effects of it. The hope of the fourth verse, is therefore distinct from, and posterior to the hope of the second; and it also appears to be derived from another source. The first hope is hope in believing; a hope which hangs direct on the testimony of God; such a hope as may be conceived to arise in the mind of Abraham, on the very

first communication that God had with him, when He said, I will make of thee a great nation—having no other ground, in fact, than a belief in the veracity of the promiser, and fed and fostered by this sole consideration, that God hath said it and shall He not do it?

Now there is not one here present, to whom the gospel does not hold forth a warrant for so hoping. It declares the remission of sins to all who put faith in the declaration. By its sweeping term "whosoever," it makes as pointed an offer of eternal life to each, as if each had gotten a special intimation by an angel sent to him from heaven. If he do not believe, he of course cannot have any feelings that are at all appropriate to the joyful contents of the message which has been rendered to him. But if he do believe, there will be peace and joy and expectation—and these, not suspended on the issue of any experience that is yet to come; but suspended, and that immediately, on a simple faith in the tidings of the gospel. They are called tidings of great joy; and sure we are that they would stand distinguished from all other tidings of this character, if they did not awaken the joy at the precise moment of their being credited. We know of no other tidings which can be called joyful, that do not make one rejoice at the moment of their being told and recognized to be true. You do not wait so many days or weeks till you feel glad, at some good news that have come to your door. You are glad on the moment of their arrival, simply by giving them credit; and the gospel, the strict and etymological meaning of which is simply good

news, will in like manner gladden every heart at the moment of its being relied upon as true: And, it being good news of pardon and eternal life to all and every, he, one of the all, will, if he believe, take the whole comfort of the declaration to himself, and have peace with God through Jesus Christ, and rejoice in the hope of His glory.

Now the second hope is distinct from this first, and is grounded on distinct considerations—not upon what the believer sees to be in the testimony of God, but upon what he finds to be in himself—It is the fruit, not of faith, but of experience; and is gathered, not from the word that is without, but from the feeling of what passes within. One would like to know how the first and the second hopes find their adjustment, and their respective places, in the bosom of a disciple; and what is the precise addition which the latter of these brings the former of them—whether the want of the second would darken and extinguish the first, by making him ashamed of it.

This matter can be illustrated as before by the case of Abraham. God, in his first communication with Him, made him a twofold promise—one of which was to have its fulfilment many ages after, and another of which was to be fulfilled in his own life time. He promised that in him all the families of the earth should be blessed; and He also promised that, upon his leaving his own country, He should meet with him and show him the land that his posterity were to inherit. Abraham simply in virtue of faith would hope for the accomplishment of both promises; He would both see afar

off the day of Christ and rejoice; and he would also leave his own country, in the confident expectation of again meeting with God, and having the land of his descendants pointed out to him. Conceive him then to have been disappointed in this expectation—to have wandered in vain without once meeting the promised manifestation—to have had no other message or visitation from the heavens save the first, which, by warranting the hope of another that it did not realize, would give him ground to suspect was a delusive one. Would not Abraham, in this case, have been ashamed of his rash confidence, and of his hasty enterprise, and of the vain and hazardous evils into which he had thrown himself? Would not the fallacy of the promise that he looked for in life, lead him to withdraw all confidence in the promise that was to have its consummation at a period of exceeding distance away from him? And, on the other hand, did not the actual fulfilment of the near, brighten and confirm all his original expectations of the distant fulfilment? Were not all his subsequent meetings with God, to him the pledges and the earnests of the great accomplishment, that still lay in the depths of a very remote futurity? Did not they serve to convince him, that the hope which he conceived at the first, and which had been so confirmed afterwards, was a hope that maketh not ashamed? And that hope which had nothing at first but the basis of faith to rest upon, did it not obtain a reinforcement of strength and of security when it further rested on the basis of experience?

I make a twofold promise to an acquaintance—

the lesser part of which should be fulfilled to-morrow, and the latter on this day twelvemonth. If he believe me to be an honest man, then, simply appended to this belief, will there be a hope of the fulfilment of both; and, for a whole day at least, he may rejoice in this hope. To-morrow comes; and, if to-morrow's promise is not fulfilled, who does not see that the hope which emanated direct from faith is thereby darkened and overthrown, and that the man will be ashamed of his rash and rejoicing expectations? But if, instead of a failure, there is a punctual fulfilment, who does not also see, that the hope he conceived at first obtains a distinct accession from the experience he met with afterwards; and that, without shame or without suspicion, he will now look to the coming round of the year with more confident expectation than ever? It is quite true, that there is a hope in believing; but from this plain example you will perceive it to be just as true, that experience worketh hope.

Now it is just so in the gospel. There is a promise addrest in it, the accomplishment of which is far of; and a promise, the accomplishment of which is near at hand. The fulfilment of the one is the pledge or token of the fulfilment of the other. By faith in God we may rejoice in hope of the coming glory; and it will be the confirmation of our hope, if we find in ourselves a present holiness. He who hath promised to translate us into a new heaven hereafter, has also promised to confer on us a new heart here. Directly appended to our belief in God's testimony, may we hope for both these fulfil-

ments; but should the earlier fulfilment not take place, this ought to convince us, that we are not the subjects of the latter fulfilment. A true faith would ensure to us both; but as the one has not cast up at its proper time, neither will the other cast up at its time—and, having no part nor lot in the present grace, we can have as little in the future inheritance.

Let us therefore not be deceived. You hear people talk of their peace with God, while art and malignity and selfishness are at full work in their unregenerate bosoms — while no one evidence is apparent of any gracious influence at all having been shed abroad in their hearts—while the nearer promise has had no fulfilment upon them, though guaranteed by the same truth with the more remote and ulterior one, and though the same God who ordains life everlasting also ordains all the heirs of it to be conformed to the image of His Son; and no one enters upon the inheritance on the other side of death, without the Spirit being given to him as the earnest of his inheritance on this side of death. By this test then let us examine ourselves; and have done, conclusively done, with that odious and hypocritical slang, into which the terms of orthodoxy and all the phrases of common-place professorship enter so abundantly—at the very time perhaps when the heart rankles with purposes of mischief; or, in the contest between faith and sense, the latter has gained a wretched ascendancy over him. Should this be the melancholy condition of any professor who now hears us, let him rest assured that he has lost the things that he has

wrought, that he has to lose whole of his original distance from God to recover anew, that he has to lay again the foundation, and has in short to do all over again. The promise of life eternal is still addrest to him, but the promise of meetness for it in a holy and renewed character goes along with it; and this present world is the place where it must be realized; and it is only by making himself sure of repentance here, and of the clean heart here, and of the right spirit here, that he can make himself sure of his calling and election hereafter. In the language of the apostle then—work out your salvation, and labour with all diligence unto the full assurance of hope unto the end.

We shall be happy if we have succeeded in impressing a clear distinction upon your minds between the hope of faith and the hope of experience; and how if the latter is wanting, the former on that account may come to be darkened and extinguished altogether. But remember you are not to wait for the second hope, till you conceive the first. It is the first, in fact, which draws the second in its train. It is the first which originates a purifying influence upon the soul. It is in proportion to the strength and habitual ascendancy of the first over the soul, that such a character is formed as may furnish the second with a solid basis to rest upon. It is the hope of the second verse which germinated the whole of that process, that led at length to the hope of the fourth verse. You cannot be too sure of the truth of God's sayings. You cannot have too much peace and joy in thinking that the remission of sins is preached unto all, and that you are

one of these all. There is a hope here which ought to arise, on the instant of belief arising in the mind; and, so far is this from superseding the hope of experience, that it will in fact bring the very feelings and raise the very fruits upon the character of the believer, that will cause the hope of experience to come surely and in succession to the hope of faith. Our best advice for brightening the second hope to the uttermost, is that you keep alive the first hope to the uttermost. Your experience will be bright just in proportion as your faith is bright; and it is just if ye continue in the faith grounded and settled, and if ye be not moved away from the hope of the gospel which ye have heard, that you will at length be presented holy and unblamable and unreprovable in the sight of God.

LECTURE XIX.

ROMANS, v, 5.

"And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost, which is given unto us."

You are already, we trust, enough familiarized to the distinction that has been offered between the hope of faith and the hope of experience. God promises to all who trust in Him, that He will give them an inheritance on the other side of death; and that He will also give them, in the shape of certain personal graces and endowments, an earnest of the inheritance on this side of it. On the very first moment that you hear these promises, if you believe in the honesty of both, you will hope for the fulfilment of both; and this is the hope of faith. Should the promise that is of earlier fulfilment come to pass at its proper time, this will be to you a satisfactory confirmation of your first belief, and of the hope that comes out of it; and you will look forward with surer anticipation than ever, to the latter of the two fulfilments. This is the hope of experience—a hope that brightens with the growth of grace on the person of the believer; and with every new finding within himself of the working of that Spirit of holiness, by which he is made meet for the everlasting abodes of holiness. In this way, there is formed a distinct and subsequent ground of hope, additional to the original one. The original ground was your faith

in the honesty of the promiser, that He would fulfil all His engagements. The additional ground is your actual experience of His punctuality, in having liquidated those of His engagements which had become due. It operates like a first instalment, which, when paid with perfect readiness and sufficiency, certainly brightens all the hope of a thorough fulfilment of the various articles of agreement, which you had when it was first entered upon. And thus it is that, though there is a hope in the second verse that is appended immediately to your faith in God—there is also a hope in the fourth verse, that has been wrought in you by experience.

You must also be sensible what the effect would have been, had there been a failure instead of a fulfilment of that promise, which falls to be accomplished first. It would have darkened and overthrown, not merely your hope of the near, but also your hope of all the ulterior good things that you had been led to depend upon. There is nothing which brings the feeling of shame more directly into the mind, than the failure of some confident or too fondly indulged expectation. "They shall be greatly ashamed that trust in graven images." "They shall not be ashamed that wait for me." "And lest," says the apostle, "we should be ashamed in this same confident boasting."

'Because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.' The love of God may signify either our love to God, as in the passage—"this is the love of God that ye keep his commandments;" or it may sig-

nify God's love to us, as in the passage—"In this was manifested the love of God towards us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him." In the verse under consideration, we apprehend that the love of God must be taken according to the latter signification. It is thus that, speaking strictly and literally, one being when kind to another, sheds upon him the fruits of that kindness, rather than the kindness itself. But the use of language has been so far extended, as to admit of the latter expression. It is quite according to established usage to say, 'I have received much kindness from another,' though I have properly received nothing but his money or his attentions or his patronage. And in like manner, do I receive love from God when I receive the Holy Ghost. And as a beneficent proprietor is said to shed abroad of his liberality among the habitations of the poor, when he causes food or raiment or fuel to enter into their houses—so does God shed abroad of His love in our hearts, when He sends the Holy Ghost to take up His residence, and there to rule by His influences.

It is through the Spirit of God, that the spirit of man is borne up in the midst of adversities. It is He who upholds the perseverance of a disciple, when all that is around him lowrs and looks dismal. It is He who causes a luminousness to rest on those eternal prospects, which are seen afar, through the dark vista of a pilgrimage which is lined on the right hand and on the left, with sorrows innumerable. It is when a bitterness comes

upon man which is only known to his own heart, that a secret balm is often infused along with it, with the joy of which a stranger does not intermeddle. There is a history of the soul that is unseen by every eye, but intimately known and felt by its conscious proprietor; and often can he testify of a tribulation that would have overwhelmed him to the death, had not a powerful influence from on high supported him under it. And when the season of it at length passes over his agitated spirit, and leaves the fruit of a solid peace, and an augmented righteousness behind it—you perceive, how in him the process is exemplified, of tribulation working in him a more strenuous perseverance in all the habits and principles of Christianity; and of perseverance working in him such an experience of himself, as argues his state of discipline and preparation for another world; and of this experience working in him the hope that He who thus fulfils upon him, the guidance in time that He has promised, will finally bestow upon him the glory He has promised in eternity.

He, says the apostle, who hath wrought us for immortality is God, who hath also given to us the earnest of the Spirit, and therefore we are confident.

It is very true, that an early fulfilment is often the satisfying token of some later fulfilment; and that grace imparted to us on this side of death, is a pledge of glory being conferred upon us on the other side of death; and, in particular, that the Holy Ghost, bestowed upon us so as to work a meetness for the inheritance, is symptomatic of our

future translation into the inheritance itself, and thus superadds the hope of experience to the hope of faith. But you must remark, that the very hope of faith, the hope which you conceive at the outset of your belief in the gospel, is wrought in you by the same Holy Ghost. It is not of yourself—it is the gift of God. It was by demonstration of the Spirit, that your eyes were opened at the first to perceive the truth of the promises; and by a fuller demonstration He can make you see this still more clearly, and rejoice in it still more confidently than before. The effect then of an additional and subsequent supply of this divine influence, is, not merely to furnish you with a pledge upon earth of the preferment that awaits you in heaven, and so to furnish you with a new ground of hope upon the subject, even the ground of experience; but it is also to brighten the ground upon which all your hope rested originally, even the ground of faith. It is to give you a more full and satisfying manifestation of the direct truth of God in the gospel than before. The Holy Ghost does not merely put into your hand another and a distinct hold, by giving you in the performance of an earlier promise, a proof of the sureness with which the later promise shall be performed also; but He strengthens the hold which you had by faith upon the promises, prior to all experimental confirmation of them in your own personal history. He does not merely supply that evidence for the truth of the gospel promise which is seen by the eye of experience; but He also casts an additional light on the evidence that you had at the first, and which is only

seen by the eye of faith. Never, in the course of the believer's pilgrimage, never does the hope of experience supersede the hope of faith. So far from this, in the very proportion that experience grows in breadth, does faith grow in brightness. And it is this last which still constitutes the sheet-anchor of his soul, and forms the main aliment of its peace and joy and righteousness. It is well, that, on looking inwardly to himself, he sees the growing lineaments of such a grace and such a character forming upon his person, as vouch him to be ripening for eternity. But, along with this process, will he also look outwardly upon God in Christ; and there see, in constantly increasing manifestation, the truth and the mercy and the unchangeableness of his reconciled Father, as by far the firmest and stablest guarantees of his future destiny. The same agent, in fact, who brings about the one effect, brings about the other. He causes you not merely to see yourself to be an epistle of the Spirit of God, and to read thereon the marks of your personal interest in the promises; but He also causes you to see these promises as standing in the outward record, invested with a light and an honesty and a freeness, which you did not see at the first revelation of them—so that it is not only the hope of experience which is furnished you anew, as you proceed on the career of actual Christianity; but, in proportion to your advancement on this career, are you also made to abound more and more in the hope of faith, through the power of the Holy Ghost.

Thus we trust, you perceive, that the good works

and the graces of personal religion, not merely supply you with fresh evidences for your hope, but also brighten your original ones. They cast backwards as it were a good reflex influence on the faith from which they emanated. It is said of the Holy Ghost, that He is given to those who obey Him. Follow out the impulse of a conscience which He hath enlightened in every practical business that you have on hand; and you will find, as the result of it, a larger supply of that light which makes clearer than before, all those truths and promises of Christianity, on which a firm dependence may be laid by an act of believing. It is thus too that, if you keep the sayings of Christ, He will manifest Himself; and though works are of no value unless they are wrought in faith, yet the very doing of them is followed up by such larger revelations of the truth and doctrine of God, that by works is your faith made perfect.

Give us a man walking in darkness, and having no light, from whose mind the comfort of the promises is fading away, and whose fits of thought and pensiveness speak him to be on the borders of some deep approaching melancholy. It is sin in all probability that has conducted him onwards to this mental dejection; and that not merely by its having obliterated those traces of personal character, the observation of which, had at one time wrought the hope of experience in his bosom—but by its having grieved and exiled the Holy Spirit for a season, whose office as a Revealer and as a Remembrancer of all truth, is therefore suspended, and who has therefore left the tenement of his

heart desolate and uncheered by that hope of faith, which shone in a beam of gladness on the very outset of his Christianity. For the treatment of such a spiritual patient, we are often bidden tell him of the fulness that there is in Christ; and tell him of the power which lies in His blood, for turning guilt of the most crimson dye into the snow-white of purest innocence; and to tell him of the perfect willingness that there is in God, to hold out to him over the mercy-seat the sceptre of forgiveness by the touching of which it is, that he enters anew into reconciliation before Him. And it is right, it is indispensably right, to tell him of all this; but we would tell him more. The voice of man, if the visitations of the Spirit do not go along with it, will not force an entrance, even for these welcome accents of mercy, into the heart that He had so recently abandoned. And, to win the return of this gracious and all-powerful monitor, we would bid him work for it. We would tell him, that it is by toiling and striving and painstaking, he must recover the distance which he has lost, and call the departed light and departed influence back again. If there be a remaining sense of duty in his heart, we bid him work with all his might to prosecute its suggestions; and never cease to ply his labours of obedience till He, who still it appears is whispering through the organ of conscience what he ought to do, shall be so far satisfied with the probation, as again to shed a sufficient manifestation on the doctrines which he must never cease to contemplate. And this not merely to restore to him the hope of experience,

but to revive in him the hope of faith; and, full of penitential labour as well as of penitential meditation, to make his light break forth again as the morning, and his health to spring forth speedily.

This holds out to us another view of the indissoluble alliance, that obtains between the faith of Christianity and the obedience of Christianity. It is not saying all for this, to say that the former originates the latter. It is saying still more to say that the latter strengthens and irradiates the former. The genuine faith of the gospel never can encourage sin; for sin expels that Spirit from our hearts, who perpetuates and keeps alive faith in them. And by every act of disobedience, there is a wound inflicted on the peace and joy, which a belief in the gospel ministers to the soul. It is by practically walking up to the suggestions of this heavenly monitor, that we brighten within us all His influences; and thus, as the result of a strict and holy practice, is there a clearer and fuller light reflected back again, on the very first principles from which it emanated—so that Antinomianism, after all, is very much an affair of theory, and can only be exemplified in the lives of those who either profess the faith; or imagine that they possess it, when they are utter strangers to it. The real faith which is unto salvation, not only originates all the virtues of the gospel; but, should these virtues decay into annihilation, it also would fall back again to non-existence along with them; and, on the other hand, does it uniformly grow with the growth, and strengthen with the strength of a man's practical Christianity.

On two distinct grounds, therefore, do we urge on every believer, a most persevering strenuousness, under every temptation and difficulty, in all the ways of righteousness. The first is, that he may brighten his personal evidences, of being indeed one of those whom God is enriching and beautifying with grace in time; and thus will he strengthen that basis on which the hope of experience rests, when it looks forward to a preferment of glory in eternity. The second is, that he may strengthen that very faith, by which he relied at the first on the promises both of grace here, and of glory hereafter, for, after all, it is by faith he stands; and the whole of his spiritual life will forthwith go into decay, should he only look to the hope reflected from himself, instead of drawing it direct and in chief abundance from the Saviour. An exuberance of fresh and healthy blossom upon a tree, affords a cheering promise of the fruit that may be expected from it. But what should we think of the soundness of that man's anticipations, who should cut across the stem because he thought it independent of the root, which both sent forth this beauteous efflorescence and can alone conduct it to full and finished maturity? And the same of spiritual as of natural husbandry. Were there no foliage, no fruit could be looked for—yet still it is union with the root, which produced the one and will bring on the other. And, in like manner, if there be no foliage of grace in time, there will be no fruit of glory in eternity. But still it is by abiding in Christ, that the whole process is begun, and carried forward, and will at length be perfected. Give up the hope of faith,

because you have now the hope of experience; and you imitate precisely the man, whom the leaves had made so sanguine of his drest and supported vine which he had trained along the wall, that he cut asunder the stem and trusted to the abundance of his foliage. And therefore we reiterate in your hearing, that the hold of faith is never to be let go; and that from Christ, who ministers all the nourishment which comes to the branches, you are never to sever yourselves; and that the habit of believing prayer, which is the great and perpetual aliment of all virtuous practice, is never to be given up; and thus it is, that, let the hope of the 4th verse brighten to any conceivable extent upon you, from the light which is reflected by your person—yet still it is the faith by which you are justified, and the hope of the 2nd verse directly emanating therefrom, that form the radical elements of your sanctification here, and your meetness for the inheritance hereafter.

LECTURE XX.

ROMANS, v, 6—11.

"For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth his love towards us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him. For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life. And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement."

From the preceding verses we gather, that a believer at the very outset of his faith, may legitimately hope for the fulfilment of all God's promises. Some of these take effect upon him in time, and form the pledges and the earnests of those further accomplishments, which are to take place in eternity —thus affording a basis on which to rest the hope of experience. It is true that they are the greater things which are to follow. The glory that is hereafter, will greatly exceed all the glimpses and all the tokens of it with which we are favoured here; and it may be thought that because we obtain small things now, it does not follow that we are to look for greater things afterwards. A man may both be able and willing, to advance the small sum which he promises to bestow on me to-morrow; but it does not certainly ensue from this, that he will be either able or willing, to grant me the large

sum promised on this day twelvemonth. Did the great things come first, we would have less hesitation in expecting the small things that were afterwards to be forth-coming. But when the order is the reverse of this, when the earlier instalments are but minute and insignificant fractions of the entire and final engagement—it may be allowed us perhaps to suspend our confidence, ere we can be sure from the puny samples on hand, of that rich and magnificent sum of blessedness, to which the gospel of Jesus Christ has pointed our expectations.

In the succeeding verses, we have an argument that is eminently fitted to overbear this diffidence; and which both explains to us why we have received our present fulfilments, and why we may rejoice in the assured hope of all our future ones. On our first acceptance of Christ by faith, all that we obtain is peace with God, who ceases to be our enemy; and lifts away from us that hand of threatened vengeance, which has already been laid upon Him who for us hath borne the whole burden of it. It is a great thing, no doubt, thus to be delivered from wrath and hostility. But you can conceive the work of reconciliation to go no farther than this. It might have been nothing more than the reconciliation of the judge with the prisoner, when he acquits and dismisses him. It may be the simple letting off of a criminal from punishment, or the mere ceasing to be an adversary, without passing onwards to the new character of a benefactor and a patron. But when God in ceasing to be an enemy becomes a friend—when, instead of

being dealt with as the objects of His displeasure, we are dealt with as the objects of His love—when we get not only forbearance, but positive favour from His hands—This is something higher than the peace which accrues to us on the outset of our Christianity. There is an advance made in the scale of privilege; and, if to be at peace with God through Jesus Christ our Lord is in itself a great privilege, to receive the Holy Ghost from Him as the evidence of His love is a still greater one. And, looking onward from this to futurity, it is not till we are refined into the consummate holiness, and raised into the pure and perfect happiness of heaven, that we shall reach the acme of that enjoyment, which God hath prepared for the faithful disciples of His Son.

Now according to this process, the smaller things you will observe come first, and the greater things follow. There is a gradation and an ascent of privilege, as you move forward in history—but then, to get what is less does not so warrant the expectation of getting what is more, as to get what is much, warrants the expectation of getting what is less. Surely the man who has given me the trifle which he promised, will not withhold from me the treasures that he has also promised, is not so sound a conclusion—as surely the man who promised me a magnificent donation, and hath now actually made it good, will not break his word and promise, when they are merely staked on some paltry fulfilment, that is still in reserve for me. If the lesser comes in the order of time before the greater, then the non-performance of the lesser would blast all our

expectations of the greater, and make us ashamed of the confidence with which we cherished them. But, on the other hand, the performance of the lesser does not so warrant our expectations of the greater, as if the order of the two fulfilments had been reversed. We might well be ashamed of our hope in the latter of the two, if disappointed in the earlier of the two. But if the earlier be at the same time the lesser of the two, we cannot from this comparison alone say with the apostle, as the lesser has turned out agreeably to our first hopes, how much more will the greater so turn out likewise?

Now it can be conceived, that, though one present be smaller for us to receive than another—yet it may have been given in such circumstances of difficulty or provocation, as to argue a higher degree of generosity or good-will; and be altogether, a greater and more substantial token of the giver's regard, than the larger present will be, which is promised to be conferred on us afterwards. The fellow-captive in some hostile prison, whom I had perhaps insulted and reviled, and who in justice might have dealt with me as an adversary—should he, to save me from the agonies of thirst, make over his scanty allowance of water, and so entail these agonies upon himself, telling me at the same time, that in spite of all the insolence he had gotten from my hands, he could not help feeling an unquenchable love for my person, and a no less unquenchable desire after my interests, and that if ever a happier time should restore us to liberty, and to our native land, he would contribute of his influence and his wealth to the rising interests of

my family—who does not see that even a single cup of cold water, given in such circumstances, and with such assurances as these, may well warrant the highest hopes that can be entertained of his kindness? And should I, touched and overpowered by so striking a demonstration of it, and ashamed of all my former perverseness, henceforth bind myself in gratitude and duty to this benefactor—may I not well argue, that surely the man who ministered to me, though in the smaller, and did so at such an expense of suffering to himself, and also in the face of all the injury I had done unto him, will now acquit himself to the full of the larger bounties which he held out in expectation, should I now return with him his devoted friend to the country of his fathers; and he, replaced in the ample sufficiency that belongs to him, should have it in his power, by an easy and a willing sacrifice, to translate me into all the comfort and all the independence which he engaged to render me.

There is a parallel to this in the gospel. Forgiveness is a smaller boon than positive favour; and all the tokens of this favour which are bestowed upon us in time, are smaller than that rich and full and ever-during expression of it which awaits us in eternity. Should the promise of the smaller not be fulfilled, when it becomes due, this would make us ashamed of all the expectations we had cherished of the larger. And accordingly, the apostle, from having received the Holy Ghost here as a kind of earnest or first fruits, is not ashamed of his hope for the glory of God which is to be revealed hereafter. But though this might save him

from being ashamed of his high hopes in futurity, it is not enough to warrant the argument of, how much more, that he comes forward with in the following verses. It is not a very conclusive way of reasoning to say—I have got a smaller thing according to promise, how much more then may I expect a greater thing? It would have applied better had the greater thing come first, and then you might have said, How much more, as he has given me the greater boon that he stood engaged to render, may I not hope for his punctuality with regard to the smaller? But, just as in the case of human illustration that we have already quoted, the first act of kindness, though smaller in the matter of it, may have been done in such circumstances of difficulty and provocation, as to be a far more unquestionable evidence of regard than any future act of goodness possibly can be, however great in the matter of it—because done in circumstances of ease and good agreement. And these preparatory remarks will enable us to enter into the spirit and to estimate aright the strength and conclusiveness of the argument which follows.

Ver. 6. We were not able to extricate ourselves from the prison-house of God's righteous condemnation. We had not strength for that perfect obedience, which a relentless and insurmountable law has laid upon all its subjects; and even though we had, such obedience could only satisfy for itself, and at its own season. It could not cancel the guilt of another season. But the truth is, that we could neither do away the guilt of our past, nor the pollution of our present history. We were in

bondage to the power of corruption, as well as to the fears of condemnation—living as totally without God, as without hope—abandoned to the counsel of our own hearts, and taking no counsel and no reproof from Him whose right hand was upholding us continually. It was in these circumstances of provocation, that Christ undertook for us. He stretched out His mediatorial hand, for the purpose of extending the boon of forgiveness—a smaller boon than favour certainly; but remember it was a boon to the ungodly. It was a movement of kindness, forcing its way through an obstacle that might well have stifled and repressed it. It was an expression of love so ardent, that even impiety, in full and open and determined career, could not extinguish it. It was at the time of the world's greatest wickedness, that He descended from on high, not to condemn but to save it. It is true that the first effect of this benevolent undertaking, was simply an acquittal to those who had been guilty; and this was but the prelude of greater things to follow. But this first thing was wrought out in the face of greatest provocation, and at the expense of most painful endurance. It was rendered unto men at the time when men were rioting at large, both against the law of conscience and the law of revelation. It was when every man had turned to his own way, that God laid upon His Son the iniquities of us all. Our time of greatest regardlessness was His time of greatest regard. And on estimating the intensity of affection, not by the magnitude of its positive dispensations, but by the magnitude of resistance it must overcome, and

of the sufferings it must undergo—it was at the outset of our redemption; it was at that due time when Christ died for the ungodly; it was in the act of making atonement for the sins of the people, out of which act the first though the smallest benefit that emerged was the forgiveness of the people —it was then nevertheless, that the love of God in Christ, bearing all the condemnation of our unthankful species, and pouring out His soul unto the death for them—it was then that this love sent forth its most wondrous and most convincing manifestation.

Ver. 7. The point insisted on by the apostle here, is that Christ died for us when we were yet enemies in our heart toward Him. But it should also be kept in mind, that His was no ordinary death; that they were not the pangs of a common dissolution which extorted such agonies of fear, and such cries of bitter suffering, and drew out on the person of our Redeemer both in the garden and upon the cross such mysterious symptoms of distress too exquisite for human imagination, of an endurance far deeper than we have any conception of. It is evident from the whole history of the hour and the power of darkness, that, though He had the whole strength of the Divinity to uphold Him, there was a struggle to be made, and a hostility to be baffled, and an awful enterprise of toil and of strenuousness to be gone through, under the severity of which our Saviour had well nigh given way—that ere the victory was His, He had to travail in His strength, and to put forth all the greatness of it; and, warring with principalities and

powers, had, in the words of Isaiah, to tread in the wine-press alone, and trample on His enemies with fury, and to stain His raiment, and to wield the arm of His supernatural might, ere He brought down to the earth the strength that was opposed to Him. It should be recollected, that the death of Christ was not in semblance merely, but in real and substantial amount, an atonement for the sins of the world—that He tasted death not as an individual, but tasted it for every man—that on Him was laid the accumulated weight of all that wrath, which an eternity would not have expended on the millions for which He died—that there was the actual transference of God's avenging hand from the heads of the countless guilty He has redeemed, to the head of this one innocent sufferer—and that from the moment He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, to the moment of His crying, It is finished, and when He gave up the ghost, there was discharged upon the head of this great Sacrifice all the vials of a wrath which the misery everlasting, and that of a multitude which no man could number, could not have exhausted; there were condensed upon His soul all the agonies which but for Him the vast family of the redeemed would have borne.

But it is not here on the kind of death which our Saviour endured that the apostle founds his argument of God's love to us—It is on the kind of people whom He died for—even sinners. This peculiarizes and exalts the benevolence of Christ above all human benevolence. There is a devotedness of affection here, of which there is no example

in the history of our species. For a righteous man, that is a man free from blame or criminality, for a simply innocent man there is scarcely any that would die; for a good man, one who rises above the level of mere innocence, one who is signalized by achievements of positive benevolence or heroic patriotism, some might die—like some disciples of Paul, who for his life would lay down their own necks—or like the members of some gallant band, who would rally in defence of the worth and friendship that they revered—or like the martyrs of Christianity who died for the honours of its Founder, but not till He had evinced the highest sublime of goodness by dying for the worst and most worthless of mankind. It is on this that the apostle lays the stress of his argument; and from this he infers, that, even at the outset of our redemption and when we had got nothing more than forgiveness, there was such a demonstration of God's affection for sinners, as warranted the fullest expectation of all the higher blessings that we are to receive from His hand.

For observe, that though favour may be higher in the scale of privilege than forgiveness, and glory through eternity higher than grace in time—yet it was at the point when forgiveness was secured for the guilty—it was then that the love of God in Christ made its most decisive exhibition—It was then that it triumphed over difficulties which no longer exist—It was then that it leaped over a barrier which is now levelled into an open way of access between earth and heaven—It was then that human sinfulness rose in a smoke of abomination

before the throne of God, unaccompanied as yet with that incense of a sweet-swelling savour which the sacrifice of Christ has since infused into it—It was then that the awful death of the atonement, a death never now to be repeated, had still to be endured. All these stood in the way of reconciliation; and though this be the first and the smallest boon that is conferred upon the sinner, yet conferred as it was in the midst of obstacles which no longer exist, and of sins that are now blotted out in the blood of the Lamb, so that God remembers them no more—this smallest boon, viewed as a demonstration of love and a pledge of future kindness, more than overpasses all the subsequent boons that can be rendered in circumstances where there is nothing to struggle with, and no barrier in the way of their accomplishment. So that the apostle is warranted in all his larger expectations after this. Much more then, being justified by His blood, we shall be translated into all the blessings of a positive salvation.

The love of a benefactor is not to be estimated by the magnitude of his gift, but by the exposure and the suffering that he incurred in rendering it. The gifts of God may go on progressively increasing through all eternity; but it was the first gift of reconciliation which had to force its way through the host of impediments, that stood between a holy Lawgiver and a sinful world. After these were removed, the following gifts came spontaneously and without interruption, out of the exuberant wealth and liberality of the Godhead. So that, from the very first, we have the argument in all

its entireness. If God spared not His own Son to reconcile a world that had nothing but guilt and depravity to offer to His contemplation—how much more, now that atonement is made, will He bless and enrich all those who have fled to it for refuge, and whom He now beholds in the face of His anointed.

This then is an argument altogether addressed to the hope of faith, and may be seized upon and felt in the whole force of it, ere there is time for the hope of experience. The moment that one looks with a believing eye to the work of redemption, he may gather from it all the materials which make up this argument. He may there see, that Christ at that time died for the sinful, to bring about their agreement with God; and that, at the present time, Christ has not to die any more, and that in Him the guilt of sinfulness has been done away. 'If when enemies we were reconciled, by His death—how much more, now that we are reconciled, shall all the blessings that He died to purchase be lavished upon us abundantly.' If, when so many difficulties stood betwixt us, He forced His way through them, for the purpose of reaching forgiveness to the condemned—how much more, now that all is open and level and free in the road of communication between earth and heaven, will He, out of the treasury of His fulness, shed upon us all the needful grace here, and translate us into all the promised glory hereafter. True, if the grace did not come, this might well blast and annihilate these fond anticipations. We cannot get to heaven without such a stepping-stone; and when we have

reached this length, we can see more clearly and hope more confidently for the promised inheritance than before. But still the main light which rests upon this glorious futurity, radiates upon it, from the great and primary work of Christ's undertaking as He did, and Christ's doing as He did, for the guilty. And the reason why we have obtained the grace, and still the chief reason why we may look for the glory, is that seeing He did so much to reconcile and to justify—how much more, now that the heat and difficulty and strenuousness of the contest are all over, how much more may we not anticipate all the blessings of a positive salvation from His hand.

Finally, let it be observed of the 9th verse, that Paul speaks of himself and others in the character of believers, and as being already justified by the blood of Jesus. The force of the consideration lies in this—that seeing He shed His blood to justify us, at the same time that we are unrepentant and unreconciled, and thus to save us from the wrath that abideth on all who believe not—how much more, now that this is done, and that, instead of dying any more, He has only to give, in large and easy liberality, out of His fulness—how much more, by the supplies of His grace and strength, will He save us from the wrath of those who shall finally fall away. The tribulations in which he gloried might not have wrought a more strenuous perseverance in the Christian course; but, like certain hearers in the parable of the sower, he might have been offended when persecution came, and actually fallen away. Instead of patience working

such an experience, as made him hopeful that he was indeed a Christian, the defect and overthrow of his constancy, might have given him the melancholy and convincing experience, that he had indeed no lot or part in the matter. Instead of a thriving process, it might have been a ruinous one; but grace, it appears from the result, was given to uphold him in a course of spiritual prosperity, under all his outward tribulations; and he now hoped more than ever that God had manifested the special love that He bore, by the Holy Ghost that was given to him. And how could it be otherwise, he goes on to argue, than that the Holy Ghost should be given? Would not He who did so much to justify, and at such an expense of suffering to Himself, would not He also sanctify when there was no suffering incurred by the process? Will not He who saved us by His blood then, much more save us by His Spirit now? Will not He who at that time delivered us, by dying, from the wrath due to the impenitent and ungodly—at this time, when we are cleaving to Him in dependence and desire, deliver us by His grace, from the sorer punishment of those who draw back to the perdition of the soul? There may be fatherly chastisements. There may be the infliction of a severe and salutary discipline. Should a professor sin the sin that is unto death, it will then be impossible to renew him again unto repentance. But if, instead of a hollow-hearted and hypocritical dissembler, there was really a sound principle of adherence and honest faith with him who has been overtaken in a fault—then that man will be saved, yet so perhaps as by fire.

He will not escape the hand of chastisement in time, though he will escape the hand of vengeance in eternity. He will be cast down yet not destroyed. God will forgive the iniquity of his sin, but at the same time take vengeance upon him for his inventions. He will make him taste the bitterness of transgression; and give him the experimental demonstration of His own abhorrence to it; and render it manifest as day, that there is an utter and irreversible opposition, between the indulgence of a sinner, and the hope of a believer; and, rather than that he should miss the lesson, He will force it upon him with the authoritative severity of a master, who has determined that He will not let him alone till he learn it; and if one corrective ministration will not serve the purpose, He will come forward with another and another—still ringing this prophetic knell into the ear of him who is under discipline, that "for all this mine anger is not turned away, but my hand is stretched out still." It is not from such wrath that a disciple is saved—But let it work him into the process of tribulation, and patience, and experience, and hope; and from the wrath of eternity he will be saved—saved as if by fire—and verifying this word in his own person, that it is through manifold tribulations we shall enter into the kingdom of God.

LECTURE XXI.

ROMANS, v, 10.

"For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life."

St. Paul, who, by the way, is by far the most argumentative of all the apostles,—and who, from being the most successful of them all, proves that argument is both a legitimate and a powerful weapon in the work of making Christians, sometimes undertakes to reason upon one set of premises, and then to demonstrate, how much more valid and irresistible is the conclusion which he tries to establish, when he is in actual possession of another and more favourable set of premises. In this way a great additional strength is made to accrue to his argument—and the "how much more" with which he finishes, causes it to come with greater power and assurance upon his readers—and it is this which gives him the advantage of what is well known, both in law and in logic under the phrase of *argumentum a fortiore*, or, an argument which affirms a thing to be true in adverse and unpromising circumstances, and therefore far more worthy of being held true in likelier circumstances. It is quite a familiar mode of reasoning in common discourse. • If a neighbour be bound to sympathise with the distresses of an unfortunate family, how much more, when that neighbour is a relative. If I obtained

an offer of friendship from a man in difficulties, how much more may I count upon it should he now be translated into a state of sufficiency and ease. If in the very heat of our quarrel, and under the discouragement of all my provoking insolence towards him, my enemy forbear the vengeance which he had the power to inflict, how much more, should the quarrel be made up, and I have been long in terms of reconciliation with him, may I feel myself secure from the effects of his indignation. Such also is the argument of my text. There is one state of matters in which God sets forth a demonstration of friendship to the world; and this is compared with the present and actual state of matters, more favourable than the former, and from which therefore, the friendship of God may be still more surely inferred, and still more firmly confided in. But it will be further seen, that in this short sentence of the apostle, there lies a compound argument which admits of being separated into distinct parts. There is a reference made to a twofold state of matters, which, by being resolved into its two particulars, brings out two accessions of strength to the conclusion of our apostle, which are independent of each other. He, in fact, holds forth a double claim upon our understanding, and we propose to view successively the two particulars of which it is made up.

There is first then a comparison made between one state of matters, and another state of matters which obtain in our earth—and there is at the same time a comparison made between one state of matters, and another state of matters which obtain in

heaven — and from each of these there may be educed an argument for strengthening the assurance of every Christian, in that salvation which the gospel has made known to us.

Let us first look then to the two states upon earth; and this may be done either with a reference to this world's history, or it may be done with a reference to the personal history of every one man who is now a believer.

That point of time in the series of general history at which reconciliation was made, was when our Saviour said that it is finished, and gave up the ghost. God may be said to have then become reconciled to the world, in as far as He was ready to enter into agreement with all who drew nigh in the name of this great propitiation. Now think of the state of matters upon earth, previous to the time when reconciliation in this view was entered upon. Think of the strength of that moving principle in the bosom of the Deity, which so inclined Him towards a world then lying in the depths of ungodliness—and from one end to another of it, lifting the cry of rebellion against Him. There was no movement on the part of the world towards God—no returning sense of allegiance towards Him from whom they had revolted so deeply—no abatement of that profligacy which so rioted at large over a wide scene of lawless and thankless and careless abandonment — no mitigation of that foul and audacious insolence by which the throne of Heaven was assailed; and a spectacle so full of offence to the unfallen was held forth, of a whole province in arms against the lawful Monarch of creation. Had

the world thrown down its weapons of disobedience —had a contrite and relenting spirit gone previously forth among its generations—had the light which even then glimmered in the veriest wilds of Paganism, just up to the strength and degree of its influence, told aright on the moral sensibilities of the deluded and licentious worshippers—had they, whose conscience was a law unto themselves, just acted and followed on as they might under the guidance of its compunctious visitations—had there been any thing like the forthgoing of a general desire, however faint, towards that unknown Being, the sense and impression of whom were never wholly obliterated—then it might have been less decisive of God's will for reconciliation, that He gave way to these returning demonstrations on the part of His alienated creatures, and reared a pathway of communication by which sinners may draw nigh unto God. But for God to have done this very thing, when these sinners were persisting in the full spirit and determination of their unholy warfare —for Him to have done so, when, instead of any returning loyalty rising up to Him like the incense of a sweet-smelling savour, the exhalations of idolatry and vice blackened the whole canopy of heaven, and ascended in a smoke of abomination before Him —for Him to have done so at the very time that all flesh had corrupted its ways, and when, either with or without the law of revelation, God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually—in these circumstances of deep and unalleviated provocation, and when God

might have eased Him of His adversaries, by sweeping the whole of this moral nuisance away from the face of the universe which it deformed—for such a time to have been a time of love, when majesty seemed to call for some solemn vindication, but mercy could not let us go—Surely, if through such a barrier between God and the guilty, He, in the longings of His desire after them, forced a pathway of reconciliation, He never will turn Himself away from any, who, cheered forward by His own entreaties, are walking upon that path. But if, when enemies He Himself found out an approach by which He might beckon them to enter into peace with Him, how much more, when they are so approaching, will He meet them with the light of His countenance, and bless them with the joys of His salvation.

But this argument may be looked to in another way. Instead of fixing our regards upon that point in the general history of the world, when the avenue was struck out between our species and their offended Lawgiver; and through the rent veil of a Saviour's flesh, a free and consecrated way of access was opened for the guiltiest of them all—let a believer in Christ fix his regards upon that passage in his own personal history at which he was drawn in his desires and in his confidence to this great Mediator, and entered upon the grace wherein he now stands, and gave up his evil heart of unbelief, and made his transition out of darkness to the marvellous light of the gospel. Let him compare what he was, when an alien from God, through wicked works of his own, with what he is when a humble but confiding expectant of God's mercy

through the righteousness of another. Who translated him into the condition which he now occupies? Who put into his heart the faith of the gospel? Who awakened him from the dormancy and unconcern of nature? Who stirred up that restless but salutary alarm which at length issued in the secure feeling of reconciliation? There was a time of his past life when the whole doctrine of salvation was an offence to him; when its preaching was foolishness to his ears; when its phraseology tired and disgusted him; when, in light and lawless companionship, he put the warnings of religious counsel, and the urgency of menacing sermons away from his bosom—a time when the world was his all, and when he was wholly given over to the idolatry of its pursuits and pleasures and projects of aggrandizement—a time when his heart was unvisited with any permanent seriousness about God, of whom his conscience sometimes reminded him; but whom he soon dismissed from his earnest contemplation—a time when he may have occasionally heard of a judgment; but without one practical movement of his soul towards the task of preparation—a time when the overtures of peace met him on his way; but which he, in the impetuous prosecution of his own objects, utterly disregarded—a time when death plied him with its ever-recurring mementoes; but which he, overlooking the short and summary arithmetic of the few little years that lay between him and the last messenger, placed so far on the back ground of his anticipation, that this earth, this passing and perishable earth, formed the scene of all his solicitudes.

Is there none here present who remembers such a time of his bygone history, and with such a character of alienation from God and from His Christ, as we have now given to it? And who, we ask, recalled him from this alienation? By whose guidance was he conducted to that demonstration either of the press or of the pulpit, which awakened him? Who sent that afflictive visitation to his door, which weaned his spirit from the world, and wooed it to the deathless friendships, and the ever-during felicities of heaven? Who made known to him the extent of his guilt, with the overpassing extent of the redemption that is provided for it? It was not he himself who originated the process of his own salvation. God might have abandoned him to his own courses; and said of him, as He has done of many others, "I will let him alone, since he will have it so;" and given him up to that judicial blindness, under which the vast majority of the world are now sleeping in profoundest lethargy; and withheld altogether that light of the Spirit, which he had done so much to extinguish. But if, instead of all this, God kept by him in the midst of his thankless provocations; and, while he was yet a regardless enemy, made His designs of grace to bear upon him; and, throughout all the mazes of his checkered history, conducted him to the knowledge of Himself as a reconciling God; and so softened his heart with family bereavements, or so tore it from all its worldly dependencies by the disasters of business, or so shook it with frightful agitation by the terrors of the law, or so shone upon it with the light of His free Spirit, as made

it glad to escape from the treachery of nature's joys and nature's promises, into a relying faith on the offers and assurances of the gospel—Why, just let him think of the time when God did so much for him—and then think of the impossibility that God will recede from him now; or that He will cease from the prosecution of that work in circumstances of earnest and desirous concurrence on the part of the believer, which He Himself begun in the circumstances either of his torpid unconcern, or of his active and haughty defiance. The God who moved towards him in his days of forgetfulness, will not move away from him in his days of hourly and habitual remembrance; and He who intercepted him in his career of rebellion, will not withdraw from him in his career of new obedience; and He who first knocked at the door of his conscience, and that too in a prayerless and thankless and regardless season of his history, will not—now that he prays in the name of Christ, and now that his heart is set upon salvation, and now that the doctrine of grace forms all his joy and all his dependence; He who thus found him a distant and exiled rebel, will not abandon him now that his fellowship is with the Father and with the Son. It is thus, that the believer may shield his misgiving heart from all its despondencies. It is thus, that the argument of the text goes to fortify his faith, and to perfect that which is lacking in it. It is thus that the how much more of the apostle should cause him to abound more and more in the peace and the joy of believing—and should encourage every man who has laid hold on the hope

set before us, to steady and confirm his hold still more tenaciously than before, so as to keep it fast and sure even unto the end.

With a man who knows himself to be a believer, this argument is quite irresistible; and it will go to establish his faith, and to strengthen it, and to settle it, and to make it perfect. But it is possible for a man really to believe, and yet to be in ignorance for a time whether he does so or not; and it is possible for a man to be in earnest about his soul, and yet not to have received that truth which is unto salvation; and it is possible for him to be actuated by a strong general desire to be right, and yet to be walking among the elements of uncertainty; and it is possible for him to be looking to that quarter whence the truths of the gospel are offered to his contemplation, and yet not to have attained the distinct or satisfying perception of them—thoroughly engaged in the prosecution of his peace with God—determinedly bent on this object as the highest interest he can possibly aspire after—labouring after a settlement; and, under all the agonies of a fierce internal war, seeking and toiling and praying for his deliverance. It is at the point of time when faith enters the heart, that reconciliation is entered upon—nor can we say of this man, that he is yet a believer, or, that he has passed from the condition of an enemy to that of a friend. And yet upon him the argument of the text should not be without its efficacy. It is such an argument as may be employed not merely to confirm the faith which already exists, but to help on to its formation that faith which is struggling for an establishment

in the heart of an enquirer. It falls, no doubt, with fullest and most satisfying light upon the heart of a conscious believer and yet it may be addressed, and with pertinency too, to men under their first and earliest visitations of seriousness. For give me an acquaintance of whom I know nothing more than that his face is towards Zion—give me one arrested by a sense of guilt and of danger, and merely groping his way to a place of enlargement—give me a soul not in peace, but in perplexity, and in the midst of all those initial difficulties which beset the awakened sinner, ere Christ shall give him light—give me a labouring and heavy-laden sinner, haunted by the reflection, as if by an arrow sticking fast, that the mighty question of his eternity is yet unresolved. There are many we fear amongst you to whom this tremendous uncertainty gives no concern—but give me one who has newly taken it up, and who, in the minglings of doubt and despondency, has not yet found his way to any consolation; and even with him may it be found, that the same reason which strengthens the hope of an advanced Christian, may well inspire the hope of him who has still his Christianity to find, and thus cast a cheering and a comforting influence on the very infancy of his progress. For if it was in behalf of a careless world that the costly apparatus of redemption was reared—if it was in the full front and audacity of their most determined rebellion that God laid the plan of reconciliation—if it was for the sake of men sunk in the very depths of ungodliness, that He constructed His overtures of peace, and sent forth His Son with them amongst

our loathsome and polluted dwelling-places—if, to get at His strayed children, He had thus to find His way through all those elements of impiety and ungodliness, which are most abhorrent to the sanctity of His nature—Think you, that the God who made such an advancing movement towards the men whose faces were utterly away from Him—is this a God who will turn His own face away from the man who is moving towards God, and earnestly seeking after Him if haply he may find Him?

This argument obtains great additional force, when we look to the state of matters in heaven at the time that we upon earth were enemies; and compare it with the state of matters in heaven, now that we are actually reconciled, or are beginning to entertain the offers of reconciliation. Before the work of our redemption, Jesus Christ was in primeval glory; and though a place of mystery to us, it was a place of secure and ineffable enjoyment —insomuch, that the fondest prayer He could utter in the depths of His humiliation, was to be taken back again to the Ancient of days, and there to be restored to the glory which He had with Him before the world was. It was from the heights of celestial security and blessedness that He looked with an eye of pity on our sinful habitations—it was from a scene where beings of a holy nature surrounded Him, and the full homage of the Divinity was rendered to Him, and, in the ecstacies of His fellowship with God the Father, all was peace and purity and excellence—it was from this that He took His voluntary departure, and went out on His errand to seek and to save us. And it was

not the parade of an unreal suffering that He had to encounter; but a deep and a dreadful endurance —it was not a triumphant promenade through this lower world, made easy over all its obstacles by the energies of His Godhead; but a conflict of toil and of strenuousness—it was not an egress from heaven on a journey brightened through all its stages by the hope of a smooth and gentle return; but it was such an exile from heaven as made His ascent and His readmittance there the fruit of a hard-won victory. We have nothing but the facts of revelation to guide or to inform us; and yet from these we most assuredly gather, that the Saviour, in stepping down from the elevation of His past eternity, incurred a substantial degradation—that when He wrapped Himself in the humanity of our nature, He put on the whole of its infirmities and its sorrows—that, for the joy which He renounced, He became acquainted with grief, and a grief too commensurate to the whole burden of our world's atonement—that the hidings of His Father's countenance were terrifying to His soul; and when the offended justice of the Godhead was laid upon His person, it required the whole strength of the Godhead to sustain it. What mean the agonies of the garden? What mean the bitter cries and complainings of abandonment upon the cross? What meaneth the prayer that the cup might pass away from Him; and the struggle of a lofty resolution with the agonies of a mighty and unknown distress; and the evident symptoms of a great and toilsome achievement throughout the whole progress of this undertaking; and angels looking down from their

eminencies, as on a field of contest, where a great Captain had to put forth the travailling of His strength, and to spoil principalities and powers, and to make a show of them openly? Was there nothing in all this, do you think, but the mockery of a humiliation that was never felt—the mockery of a pain that was never suffered—the mockery of a battle that was never fought? No, be assured that there was, on that day, a real vindication of God's insulted majesty. On that day there was the real transference of an avenging hand, from the heads of the guilty to the head of the innocent. On that day one man died for the people, and there was an actual laying on of the iniquities of us all. It was a war of strength and of suffering in highest possible aggravation, because the war of elements which were infinite. The wrath which millions should have borne, was all of it discharged. Nor do we estimate aright what we owe of love and obligation to the Saviour, till we believe, that the whole of that fury, which if poured out upon the world, would have served its guilty generations through eternity—that all of it was poured into the cup of expiation.

A more adequate sense of this might not only serve to awaken the gratitude which slumbers within us, and is dead—it might also, through the aid of the argument in our text, awaken and assure our confidence. If when we were enemies, Christ ventured on an enterprise so painful—if when loathsome outcasts from the sacred territory of heaven, He left the abode of His Father, and exchanged love, and adoration, and congenial felicity

among angels, for the hatred and persecution of men—if when the agonies of the coming vengeance were still before Him, and the dark and dreary vale of suffering had yet to be entered upon, and He had to pass under the inflictions of that sword which the Eternal God awakened against His fellow, and He had still to give Himself up to a death equivalent in the amount of its soreness to the devouring fire, and the everlasting burnings, which but for Him believers would have borne—if, when all this had yet to be travelled through, He nevertheless, in His compassionate longing for the souls of men, went forth upon the errand of winning them to Himself,—let us just look to the state of matters then, and compare it with the state of matters now. Christ has there ascended on the wings of victory; and He is now sitting at God's right hand, amid all the purchased triumphs of His obedience; and the toil, and the conflict, and the agony, are now over; and from that throne of mediatorship to which He has been exalted, is it His present office to welcome the approaches of all who come, and to save to the uttermost all who put their trust in Him. And is it possible, we would ask, is it possible that He who died to atone, now that He lives, will not live to make intercession for us? Can the love for men which bore Him through a mighty and a painful sacrifice, not be strong enough to carry Him onwards in peace and in triumph to its final consummation? Will He now abandon that work which His own hands have so laboriously reared?—or leave the cause for which He has already sustained the weight of

such an endurance, in the embryo and unfinished state of an abortive undertaking? Will He cast away from Him the spoils of that victory for which He bled; and how can it be imagined for a moment, but by such dark and misgiving hearts as ours, that He whose love for a thankless world carried Him through the heat and the severity of a contest that is now ended, will ever, with the cold and forbidding glance of an altered countenance, spurn an enquiring world away from Him

The death of a crucified Saviour, when beheld under such a view, is the firm stepping-stone to confidence in a risen Saviour. You may learn from it, that His desire and your salvation are most thoroughly at one. Of His good-will to have you into heaven, He has given the strongest pledge and demonstration, by consecrating, with His own blood, a way of access, through which sinners may draw nigh. And now that, as our forerunner, He is already there—now that He has gone up again to the place from which He arose—now that, to the very place which He left to die, and that, that the barrier to its entrance from our world may be moved away, He has ascended alive and in glory without another death to endure, for death has no more the dominion over Him—will ever He do anything to close that entrance which it has cost Him so much to open? Will He thus throw away the toil and the travail of His own soul, and reduce to impotency that apparatus of reconciliation which He Himself has reared, and at an expense too equal to the penance of many millions through eternity? What He died to begin, will He no

now live to carry forward; and will not the love which could force a way through the grave to its accomplishments—now that it has reached the summit of triumph and of elevation which He at present occupies, burst forth and around the field of that mighty enterprise, which was begun in deepest suffering, and will end in full and finished glory?

This is a good argument in all the stages of a man's Christianity. Whether he has found, or is only seeking—whether he be in a state of faith, or in a state of enquiry—whether a believer, like Paul and many of the disciples that he was addressing, or an earnest and convinced sinner groping the way of deliverance, and labouring to be at rest—There may be made to emanate from the present circumstances of our Saviour, and the position that He now occupies, an argument either to perpetuate the confidence where it is, or to inspire it where it is not. If when an enemy I was reconciled, and that too by His death—if He laid down His life to remove an obstacle in the way of my salvation, how much more, now that He has taken it up, will He not accomplish that salvation. It is just fulfilling His own desire. It is just prospering forward the very cause that His heart is set upon. It is just following out the faculties which He Himself has opened; and marching onward in glorious procession, to the consummation of those triumphs for which He had to struggle His way through a season of difficulties that are now over. It is thus that the believer reasons himself into a steadier assurance than before; and peace may be made to flow through his heart like a mighty river;

and, resting on the foundation of Christ, he comes to feel himself in a sure and wealthy place; and the good-will of the Saviour rises into an undoubted axiom—so as to chase away all his distrust, and cause him to delight himself greatly in the riches of his present grace, and in the brightening certainty of his coming salvation.

And this view of the matter is not only fitted to heighten the confidence that is already formed—but also to originate the confidence that needs to be inspired. It places the herald of salvation on a secure and lofty vantage-ground. It seals and authenticates the offer with which he is entrusted; and with which he may go round among the guiltiest of this world's population. It enables him to say, that for guilt even in the season of its most proud and unrepentant defiance, did Christ give Himself up unto the death; and that to guilt even in this state of hardihood, Christ in prosecution of His own work has commissioned him to go with the overtures of purchased mercy—and should the guilt which has stood its ground against the threatenings of power, feel softened and arrested by pity's preventing call, may the preacher of forgiveness affirm, in His Master's name, that He, who for the chief of sinners bowed Himself down unto the sacrifice, will not now, that He has arisen a Prince and a Saviour, stamp a nullity upon that contest, the triumph of which is awaiting Him; but the bitterness of which has passed away. He will not turn with indifference and distaste from that very fruit which He Himself has fought for. But if for guilt in its full impenitency, He dyed His gar-

ments, and waded through the arena of contest and of blood—then should the most abandoned of her children begin a contrite movement towards Him, it is not He who will either break the prop for which He feels, or quench his infant aspiration. He will look to him as the travail of His own soul, and in him He will be satisfied.

We know not what the measure of the sinfulness is of any who now hears us. But we know, that however foul his depravity, and however deep the crimson dye of his manifold iniquities may be, the measure of the gospel warrant reaches even unto him. It was to make an inroad on the territory of Satan, and reclaim from it a kingdom unto Himself, that Christ died, and we speak to the farthest off in guilt and alienation amongst you—take the overture of peace that is now brought to your door, and you will add to that kingdom which He came to establish, and take away from that kingdom which He came to destroy. The freeness of this gospel has the honour of Him who liveth and was dead for its guarantee. The security of the sinner and the glory of the Saviour are at one. And, with the spirit of a monarch who had to fight his way to the dominion which was rightfully his own, will He hail the returning allegiance of every rebel, as a new accession to His triumphs, as another trophy to the might and the glory of His great undertaking.

But, amid all this latitude of call and of invitation, let me press upon you that alternative character of the gospel, to which we have often adverted. We have tried to make known to you, how its encouragements rise the one above the other to

him who moves towards it. But it has its corresponding terrors and severities, which also rise the one above the other to him who moves away from it. If the transgressor will not be recalled by the invitation which we have now made known to him, he will be rivetted thereby into deeper and more hopeless condemnation. If the offer of peace be not entertained by him; then, in the very proportion of its largeness and generosity, will the provocation be of his insulting treatment in having rejected it. Out of the mouth of the Son of man there cometh a two-edged sword. There is pardon free as the light of heaven to all who will. There is wrath, accumulated and irretrievable wrath, to all who will not. "Kiss the Son, therefore, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little: blessed only are they who put their trust in him."

It is the most delusive of all calculations to put off the acceptance of the gospel, because of its freeness; and because it is free at all times; and because the present you think may be the time of your unconcern and liberty, and some distant future be the time of your return through that door which will still be open for you. The door of Christ's mediatorship is ever open, till death put its unchangeable seal upon your eternity. But the door of your own heart, if you are not receiving Him, is shut at this moment; and every day is it fixing and fastening more closely; and long ere death summon you away, may it at length settle immovably upon its hinges; and the voice of Him who standeth without and knocketh, may be un-

heard by the spiritual ear; and, therefore, you are not made to feel too much, though you feel as earnestly as if 'now or never' was the alternative on which you were suspended. It is not enough, that the word of God, compared to a hammer, be weighty and powerful. The material on which it works must be capable of an impression. It is not enough, that there be a free and forcible application. There must be a willing subject. You are unwilling now, and therefore it is that conversion does not follow. To-morrow, the probability is, that you will be still more unwilling—and therefore, though the application be the same, the conversion is still at a greater distance away from you. And thus, while the application continues the same, the subject hardens; and a good result is ever becoming more and more unlikely; and thus may it go on till you arrive, upon the bed of your last sickness, at the confines of eternity; and what, we would ask, is the kind of willingness that comes upon you then? Willing to escape the pain of hell—this you are now, but yet not willing to be a Christian. Willing that the fire and your bodily sensations be kept at a distance from each other—this you are now, for who of you at present would thrust his hand among the flames? Willing that the frame of your animal sensibilities shall meet with nothing to wound or to torture it—this is willingness of which the lower animals, incapable of religion, are yet as capable as yourself. You will be as willing then for deliverance from material torments as you can be now; but there is a willingness which you want now, and which, in all likelihood, will then be

still more beyond the reach of your attainment. If the free gospel do not meet with your willingness now to accept and to submit to it, neither may it then. And we know not, my brethren, what has been your experience in death-beds; but sure we are, that both among the agonies of mortal disease, and the terrors of the malefactor's cell, Christ may be offered, and the offer be sadly and sullenly put away. The free proclamation is heard without one accompanying charm; and the man who refused to lay hold of it through life, finds that, in the impotency of his expiring grasp, he cannot apprehend it. And oh, if you but knew how often the word of faith may fall from the minister, and the work of faith be left undone upon the dying man—never would you so postpone the purposes of seriousness, or look forward to the last week of your abode upon earth as to the convenient season for winding up the concerns of a neglected eternity.

If you look attentively to the text, you will find, that there is something more than a shade of difference between being reconciled and being saved. Reconciliation is spoken of as an event that has already happened—salvation as an event that is to come. The one event may lead to the other; but there is a real distinction between them. It is true, that the salvation instanced in the preceding verse, is salvation from wrath. But it is the wrath which is incurred by those who have sinned wilfully, after they had come to the knowledge of the truth —"when there remaineth no more sacrifice for sin, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversa-

ries." Jesus Christ will save us from this by saving us from sin. He who hath reconciled us by His death, will, by His life, accomplish for us this salvation. Reconciliation is not salvation—it is only the portal to it. Justification is not the end of Christ's coming—it is only the means to an ultimate attainment. By His death He pacified the Lawgiver. By His life He purifies the sinner. The one work is finished. The other is not so, but is only going on unto perfection. And this is the secret of that unwillingness which we have already touched upon. There is a willingness that God would lift off from their persons the hand of an avenger. But there is not a willingness that Christ would lay upon their persons the hand of a sanctifier. The motive for Him to apprehend them is to make them holy. But they care not to apprehend that for which they are apprehended. They see not that the use of the new dispensation, is for them to be restored to the image they have lost, and, for this purpose to be purged from their old sins. This is the point on which they are in darkness; "and they love the darkness rather than the light, because their deeds are evil." They are at all times willing for the reward without the service. But they are not willing for the reward and the service together. The willingness for the one they always have. But the willingness for both they never have. They have it not to-day; and it is not the operation of time that will put it in them to-morrow. Nor will disease put it in. Nor will age put it in. Nor will the tokens of death put it in. Nor will the near and terrific view of eternity

put it in. It may call out into a livelier sensation than before a willingness for the reward. But it will neither inspire a taste nor a willingness for the service. A distaste for God and godliness, as it was the reigning and paramount principle of his life, so it may be the reigning and paramount principle of his death-bed. As it envenomed every breath which he drew, so it may envenom his last—and the spirit going forth to the God who gave it, with all the enmity that it ever had, God will deal with it as an enemy.

LECTURE XXII.

ROMANS, v, 11.

"And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement."

In the whole passage from the commencement of this chapter, we have an account of the new feelings that are introduced by faith into the heart of a believer. The first is a feeling of peace with God, of whom we could never think formerly, if we thought of Him aright, but with the sensations of disquietude and terror. The second is a feeling of exultation in the hope of some glory and enlargement that are yet unrevealed—whereby we shall attain such an enjoyment in His presence, and in the view of His perfections, as we can never reach in this world. The third is a feeling of exultation, even in the very crosses and tribulations of our earthly pilgrimage, from the process which they give rise to in our own characters—a process that manifests a work of grace here, and so serves to confirm all our expectations of a harvest of glory and blessedness hereafter. And indeed how can it be otherwise, the apostle reasons. He hath already given us His Son, will He not with Him freely give us all things? He hath already evinced His regard by sparing not His well-beloved—but surrendering Him to the death of a sore and heavy atonement for us, at the time that we were adversaries. And now that He has done so much in

circumstances so unlikely, will He not carry on the work of deliverance to its final accomplishment when circumstances have changed?—when we who at one time stood afar off, have now drawn nigh; and when He, who at one time shuddered with very apprehension at the dark vale of agony before Him, has now burst loose from His imprisonment, and finally escaped from the grief that was put upon His soul—has now a work of grace and of gladness to carry onwards to its full consummation? It is thus that the believer persuades himself into a still more settled assurance of the love of God to him than before; and whereas, in the second verse he only rejoiced in the hope of the glory of God as it will be revealed to him in future—he, in this 11th verse, expresses a present rejoicing in this same God—delighting himself even now in the assurance of His present regard; and approaching Him with affectionate confidence even now, under the sense of a present reconciliation.

The apostle in this passage makes use of such terms, as are expressive of a gradation in the feelings of him who has admitted the faith of the gospel into his mind—each rising above the other, and marking an advance and a progress in Christian experience. It is well, in the first instance, to be set at rest from all that turbulence and alarm which conviction stirs up in the sinner's restless bosom—so as that he has "peace with God through Jesus Christ our Lord." But it is better still, when he can not only look at God as disarmed of all enmity towards him—but draws near unto Him, in the confidence of a positive favour and

friendship towards him, which will afterwards appear in some glorious manifestation. "By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God." And it argues a still higher strength and stedfastness of feeling, when it can maintain itself under visitations, which, to flesh and blood, would be otherwise overpowering. "And not only so, but we glory in tribulation also." And lastly, when there is both the positive experience of a gift in hand, even the Holy Ghost shed abroad upon us; and the resistless consideration that He who reconciled sinners by death, will, now surely that they are reconciled, fully and conclusively save them, seeing that He is alive again—does the apostle, upon the strength of these, carry forward the believer to a still higher eminence in the divine life, where he can not only see afar off to the glorious regions of immortality and be glad; but where, in foretaste as it were of the joy of these regions felt by him now, he is glad in a sense of the already possessed friendship of God, glad in the intercourse of love and confidence with a present Deity.

There is much, we think, to be gathered from the consideration, that joy in God forms one of the exercises of a Christian mind—a habit or condition of the soul into which every believer is or ought to be translated—a spiritual eminence that may be gained, even in this world, and where the heart of man may experience a relish, and imbibe a rapture, which the world most assuredly knoweth not. To feel as if you were in the company of God—to have delight in this feeling—to triumph in God as

you would do in a treasure that had come into your possession—to dwell upon Him in fancy and with fondness, just as one friend dwells on the pleasing remembrance of another—to reach the ecstacies of devotion, and find that the minutes spent in communion with the heavenly and unseen witness, are far the sweetest and the sunniest intervals of your earthly pilgrimage—to have a sense of God all the day long, and that sense of Him in every way so delicious as to make the creature seem vain and tasteless in the comparison—to have His candle shining in your heart, and a secret beatitude in Him of which other men have no comprehension—to bear about with you that cheerful trust in Him, and that cherished regard to Him, which children do to a father whose love they rejoice in, and of whose good-will they are most thoroughly assured—to prize the peaceful sabbaths and the sacred retirements, when your soul can wing its contemplation toward His sanctuary, and there behold the glories of His character, at the very time that you can exult in confidence before Him—Thus to be affected towards God, and thus to glory and be glad in Him, is certainly not a common attainment; and yet we do not see how any true saint, any genuine disciple can be altogether a stranger to it. "Rejoice evermore," says the apostle of the New Testament; and "the Lord reigneth, let the earth rejoice," says the venerable patriarch of the Old. It is easy to walk in the rounds of a mechanical observation. It is easy to compel the head to obedience, against the grain and inclination of the heart. It is very easy to bear towards God

the homage of respect, or fearfulness, or solemn emotion; and to render Him the outward obeisance, and even something of the inward awe of worshippers. It is somewhat natural to feel the dread of His majesty, or to be visited by a sense of His terrors, or to be checked by the thought of His authority and power. And, under the weight of all this impressive seriousness, it is even somewhat natural and easy to pray. But it has been well remarked, that praise is not so natural, nor so common, nor withal so easy as prayer—that delight in God is a rarer and a loftier condition of the soul, than devoutness of feeling to God—that the sigh of repentance may be heard to ascend towards Him in many cases, while the singing of the heart towards Him may only break forth in very few—that to cultivate with God as a matter of duty, is a habit of far greater frequency, than to do it as if by the impulse of a spontaneous feeling—So that to serve Him as a master to whom you are bound in the way of obligation, is more the tendency of nature, than to serve Him as a friend to whom you are bound by the willing affections of a heart that freely and fully and fearlessly loves Him. Is not the latter the far more enviable habit of the soul, the one to which you would like best to be translated?—to have the spirit of adoption and cry out Abba, Father, rather than to drivel before Him among the restraints and the reluctances of a slave?—to do His will here upon earth, just as it is in heaven, that is, not as if by the force of a compulsory law, or as if under the stipulation to discharge the articles of a bond, or as

if pursued by the unrelenting jealousy of a task-master, who exacts from you work, just as one man exacts from another the square and punctual fulfilment of a bargain? This is the way in which God's will is apt to be done, or attempted to be done, on earth; but it is really not the way in heaven—where He receives a willing homage from beings of a nature congenial with His own—where the doing of His pleasure is not a drudgery for the performance of which they get their meat and their drink, but where their meat and drink itself is to do the will of God—where, instead of a duty from which they would like to stand acquitted, it is their very heart's desire to be thus employed, and that without respite and without termination—Above all, where the presence of God ever enlivens them, and their own pleasure is just His pleasure reflected back again. To carry onward the soul, from the cares and the exercises and the manifold observations of an outward godliness, to such an inward and angelic godliness as we now speak of, were to work upon it a greater transformation—than to recall it from abandoned profligacy, to the punctiliousness and the painstakings and all the decencies of a mere external reformation. And we again ask, whether you would not like to break forth upon this scene of spiritual enlargement; and be preferred to this nobler and freer elevation of character; and to walk before God as an attached and rejoicing friend, rather than as the slave of His tyranny and of your own terrors—in a word, to joy in the light of His benignant countenance, rather than to tremble under the apprehension of

His frown; and, instead of submissively toiling at what you feel to be a task, to spring forth on the career of obedience with the alacrity of one whose heart is glad in God, and who takes pleasure in all His will and in all His ways?

You all see the one style of godliness to be of a far higher and more celestial pitch than the other; and therefore, of course, at a greater distance from that state of alienation which you all occupy by nature. The very description of such a godliness may serve to convince us, how wide the disparity is between the moral element of earth, and the moral element of heaven; and this is a lesson which we should like to urge on two classes of hearers—endeavouring to sum up the whole by a practical conclusion, ere we bid a final adieu to a passage on which for so many sabbaths we have detained you.

The first class consists of those who care little about the matters of the soul and eternity; who have never with any degree of seriousness entertained the question; who have been acting all along, not on the computation of those elements into which sin and salvation and death and immortality enter—but have just lived and are continuing to live, as if the visible theatre which surrounds them were their all; and the platform of mortality whereon they walk, and underneath the surface of which they see acquaintances sinking and disappearing every day, were to hold them up and that firmly and prosperously for ever. We are sure we speak to their experience when we say, that all they mind is earthly things, and that their conversation is not in heaven; that joy in God through Jesus Christ

is a feeling which they never had, and of which they have no comprehension; that the ecstacies of those, who are so inspired and so actuated, are beyond the range of their sympathy and understanding altogether. And give them a warm habitation in time, and stock it well with this world's comforts and accommodations, and surround them with a thriving circle of relations and a merry companionship, and let the animating game of a well-doing business abroad be varied by the flow of kindness and the songs of festivity at home—and they would have no objection, if, thus compassed about and thus upholden, to be done with God and done with eternity for ever. When the preacher tries to demonstrate the utter wofulness and worthlessness of their spiritual condition, we know what the kind of question is with which they are prepared to assail him. We pay our debts; we can lift an open and unabashed visage in society; we follow the occasional impulses of a compassionate feeling towards the necessitous; we love our children; there is nothing monstrous about us, possessed as we are of all the instincts of humanity, and maintaining the full average of its equities and its decencies and its kindnesses. What then is the charge, on which you would stamp a sort of moral hideousness upon our characters; and on which you pronounce against us the awful doom of an angry God and an undone eternity? The charge is that you joy in the creature, and not at all in the Creator; and, to verify the doom, we have only to read in your hearing, the future history of this world, in as far as it is made known to us by experience and revelation.

That scene, on which you have fastened your affections so closely that you cannot tear them away from it, will soon be torn away from you; and this world, on whose fair surface it is that sense and time have spread out their bewitching allurements, and decked them forth in colours of fascination, will soon be broken up; and your hold, as well as that of all our species on the present system of things, with all its pleasures and all its interests, will be everlastingly dissolved. It is then that God will step in between your soul and those creatures after which it has ever longed, but which are now swept away. And had your joy been in Him, then the heaven where He dwells would have been your fit because your joyful habitation. But as the tree falleth so it lies; and you rise from the grave with the taste, and the character, and the feelings which you had when you breathed your last upon your death-bed; and so all that is in your heart, carrying upon it a recoil from Him with whom alone you have to do, will meet with nothing there but that which must give dread and disturbance to your carnal affections; and these affections will wander in vain for the objects which solaced them upon earth. This intermediate place between heaven and hell will no longer be found; and the unhappy exile from the one, will meet with the other alternative as his portion for evermore. It is thus that he who soweth to the flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption. The materials of his gratification will be withheld; and the sordid appetite remain unsated and restless and ever pursuing him throughout all eternity. And whatever the outward inflic-

tions may be which a God of vengeance will lay upon him—there will, in the heats and the passions and the disappointed feelings of his own unregenerate bosom, be element enough to constitute, a worm within that cannot die, and a fire within that never can be quenched.

This may perhaps convince the first class of hearers of their exceeding distance from a right habit of soul for death and the eternity beyond it; and give them some understanding of the greatness of that transition which there is from the carnal to the spiritual; and bring even their own experience to testify for this announcement of the Bible, that unless they are born again they shall not inherit the kingdom of God. And it may lead some such to bestir themselves; and to beat as it were upon the confines of that spiritual region, the occupiers of which have a taste for God, and so a foretaste of heaven in their souls; and many a weary struggle may they make after this regeneration; and perhaps, baffled in all their attempts, have the same distaste for God and godliness as ever. For how can that which is bitter become sweet unto me? How can this religion which is a weariness become a delight? How can I attain a relish and a capacity for its spiritual exercises? or share in a joy which I have never yet felt, and which certainly no method of compulsion can establish within me?

Now this leads us to a second class of hearers, who, instead of being careless, are making the interest of their soul a topic of great care and great cogitation; who have recourse to active measures in the prosecution of this great interest; and are all

alive, to the great object of being right with God. It is indeed a most natural forth-setting of the whole man on such an occasion, to proceed on the principle of 'work and win;' and thus do they strive to establish a righteousness of their own, and by much labour to lay up a claim for wages on the day of reckoning; and in so labouring, they just feel as an ordinary workman does. It is not his work that gives him pleasure. It is only the receipt of his wages that gives him pleasure. He has no rejoicing in his master or in his service. His only rejoicing is in the reward that he is to get from him, and which is distinct from his service. And in like manner, is there many a seeker after life eternal, toiling with all his might, in the spirit of bondage and of much carefulness, who has no joy in God—Satisfied if he can escape hell and reach the undefined blessedness of heaven; but who does not reflect, that it is altogether essential to this blessedness, to have such a taste for the divine character as to be glad in the contemplation of it—to have such a liking for the divine life, as that the life itself, with the necessary pleasure annexed to it, shall be reward enough for him—to have such a delight in the Being who made him, that he counts himself rich in the simple possession of His friendship, and in the breathings of a heart that glows with regard and gratitude to the person of the Divinity. Without this, all he can do is but the bodily exercise that profiteth little; and that, instead of heightening his affection for God, may only exasperate the impatience, and aggravate the weariness and distaste that he feels in his service. And

the question recurs—how shall he be translated into this right spiritual temperament? It is not by the laboriousness of the service that he will ever work himself into the habit of rejoicing in that master who appoints the service, and yet without the rejoicing there is no adaptation of the soul for paradise—no kindred quality with the atmosphere of the upper regions—none of that cordial delight in God which gives to heaven all its freeness and all its felicity—and, with all the drudgeries of outward obedience, no growing meetness whatever for the inheritance of the saints in light.

Now what is the sum and the practical conclusion of this whole matter? We trust you all perceive how it leaves you no other alternative, than that of just shutting you up unto the faith. There is a high ground of spiritual affection, and of joy in God, and of celestial delight in the sense of His presence and fellowship, to which you would like to be elevated. But you see nothing between you and that lofty region, saving a range of precipice that you cannot scale, and against which you vainly wreak all the native energies that belong to you. Let one door hitherto unobserved be pointed out, open to all who knock at it, and through which an easy and before unseen ascent conducts you to the light and purity and enjoyment of those upper regions after which you aspire; and what other practical effect should all the obstacles and impossibilities you have before encountered have upon you, than just to guide your footsteps to the alone way of access that is at all practicable? And this is just the conclusion you should come to on the

matter under consideration. Strive as painfully as you may to work out a righteousness of your own, and you will ever work among stumbling-blocks; and peace be at as great a distance from you as ever; and, so far from joy in God being attained by such a process, it is far the likeliest way of accumulating upon your souls a distaste both for Him and for His service; and, in these circumstances, we know of nothing through which to ensure your translation to this desirable habit of the soul, than just the open door of Christ's mediatorship. It has been objected to the economy of the gospel, that it exacts from its disciples an unnatural and unattainable elevation of character; and this is a most likely objection to proceed from him who looks at this economy with half an eye. The very same people may also, on looking at another side of this dispensation, be heard to object to the freeness of the gospel; to the immediate way in which any sinner may strike, even now, an act of reconciliation with the God whom he has offended; to the method of his justification by faith, and not by the works of the law; and, in a word, to the whole character of its ministrations, by which it is reduced to a matter of giving upon the one side, and of confident receiving and relying upon the other. Now the two parts which are thus objected to singly, are those which give consistent support and stability to each other. It is just by faith, and in no other possible way, that you enter upon peace and hope and love and joy. It is just through Jesus Christ, not by working for the atonement, but simply by receiving the

atonement, that you are translated into this desirable habit of the soul. It is just the freeness of the gospel, which conducts its disciples to all the peculiar affections of the gospel. If you remain on the ground of legality where 'work and win' is the order of the day, you never will win the length of firmly confiding in God as your friend, or of rejoicing in Him as the life and the dearest treasure of your existence. It is only by walking in that open way of access to which you are invited; and proceeding on the words of Christ, that, "by him if any man enter in he shall be saved;" and laying hold of that covenant of peace on which He is desirous, that all of you should lay a full and a sure reliance—It is only thus that the tastes and affections of the heart, will be led freely out to the God who thus calls and thus manifests Himself. Let us therefore sound in your hearing the invitations of the gospel; and make it known to you, that your only chance for being translated into that angelic love of God and joy in Him which obtains in paradise, is simply by believing in their honesty, and trusting, and triumphing and hoping and rejoicing accordingly. You can never be too sure of God's truth. You can never be too sure of the saving efficacy of the blood of His Son. You can never be too sure of your having received such an abundance of grace, as will exceed the measure of all your abounding iniquities. You can never be too sure of the faithfulness and infinite compassion of your Creator who is in heaven; and the more you cherish all this sureness, the more will you rejoice in Him, the shield of whose protection is

over you, and the arms of whose everlasting love are round about you. This sureness is, in fact, the high road to all that enlargement of sacred and spiritual delight, which in every other way is totally inaccessible. And we are not afraid of spoiling you into indolence by all this proclamation; or of lulling you into a habit of remissness in the exertions of duty by it; or of gendering a deceitful Antinomianism in your hearts; or of turning any one of you into the disgusting spectacle of one who can talk of peace with God, while purity and principle and real piety are utter strangers to his unregenerated bosom. It is this freeness, and this alone in fact, which will make new creatures of you; which will usher the love of God into your hearts; which will bring down the Holy Ghost upon you from heaven; which will inspire a taste for spiritual delight that you never before felt; and furnish motive and impulse and affection for bearing you onward in the way of active and persevering duty, on the career of moral and spiritual excellence.

LECTURE XXIII.

ROMANS, v. 12—21.

"Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned: (for until the law sin was in the world: but sin is not imputed when there is no law. Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression, who is the figure of him that was to come. But not as the offence, so also is the free gift. For if through the offence of one many be dead, much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, which is by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many. And not as it was by one that sinned, so is the gift: for the judgment was by one to condemnation, but the free gift is of many offences unto justification. For if by one man's offence death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ.) Therefore as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life. For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners; so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous. Moreover the law entered that the offence might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound: that as sin hath reigned unto death even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eterna life by Jesus Christ our Lord."

Ere we proceed to the detailed explanation of these verses, it may be right to premise a few general remarks, on the way in which sin found entrance into our world; on the precise doctrinal amount of our informations from Scripture relative to this subject; and on the degree in which these informations are met by the experience of man, and the natural sense that is in his bosom, respecting guilt or demerit and condemnation.

We do feel this to be an enterprise of some difficulty and magnitude; and we fear, a little too unwieldy, for its being brought to a satisfying termination within the limits of one address. It seems, however, a suitable introduction to the task of expounding the passage that is now before us; and, however formidable the attempt of grappling with a doctrine so mysterious to some and so repulsive to others as that of original sin—we do think it right, frankly to state to you all that we think, and all that we know about it.

This doctrine, then, may be regarded in two different aspects—first as it respects the disposition to sin, and secondly as it respects the guilt of it. These two particulars, you will observe, are distinct from one another. To say that man has a tendency by nature to run into the commission of sin, is to say one thing—to say that by nature he is in a state of guilt or condemnation, is to say another. The act of sin is distinct from the punishment of sin. The disposition to it is a thing separate and apart from the desert of it. The corruption of human nature, means its tendency to sin. The guilt of them who wear that nature, means their evil desert on account of sin; and for which, when reckoned with, a penal sentence may justly be laid upon them. The one is a matter of fact which may be affirmed in the word of God; but which may also be verified by the experience of man. The other is a matter of principle, which may also be affirmed in Scripture; but which may also be taken cognizance of, by the moral sense that resides and operates in the human bosom.

Now as to the fact of the sinful disposition in the nature of man, it can only be gathered—either from the sinful doings that appear in the history of man; or from the sinful desires, to the existence of which in his own heart, he has access by the light of consciousness, and in the hearts of others by the light of their testimony. Even though we had outward exhibition alone, we often have enough to infer and ascertain the inward tendency. We do not need to dig into a spring to ascertain the quality of its water, but to examine the quality of the stream which flows from it. We have no access, either by our own consciousness or by their communications, to the hearts of the inferior animals; and yet we can pronounce with the utmost confidence, from their doings and their doings alone, on the characteristic disposition which belongs to each of them. And so we talk of the faithfulness of the dog, and the ferocity of the tiger, and the gentleness of the dove,—ascribing to each a prior tendency of nature, from which there emanates the style of action that stands visibly forth in their outward histories.

Now this may lead us to understand in part, what is meant by the term original, as applied to the doctrine now under consideration. It is quite a current mode of expression, when one says that there is an original ferocity in the tiger. It means that, as the fountain on the hill-side is formed and filled up, before it sends forth the rills which proceed from it—so a ferocious quality of nature exists in the tiger, before it vents itself forth in deeds of ferocity; and it is a quality not induced upon the

animal by education; for, however left to itself, all of them evince it. Neither is it the fruit of any harsh or provoking treatment to which it is exposed; for, under every variety of treatment, or with no treatment at all, still is this the unfailing disposition of each individual belonging to the tribe. As little can it be ascribed to climate, or to accident, or to any thing posterior to the formation of the animal itself; for, under all these differences, we still behold the forth-putting of that characteristic fierceness that we are now speaking of. It may well be called original; for it would appear, both from the universality of this attribute, and from the unconquerable strength of it, that it belongs essentially to the creature; that from the very way in which it is put together at the first, from the very way in which the elements of its constitution are compounded, this fierce and fiery disposition is made to evolve itself. And just as the structure of the stomach necessarily gives rise to sensations of hunger, and hunger impels to deeds of voraciousness—so in the original frame of the animal, may there be an inherent temper of cruelty, which, ere it proceeds to devour its victim, leads it with savage delight to aggravate and prolong its sufferings.

There is no difficulty in understanding here, what is meant by the difference between the original and the actual. Could the cruelties of a tiger be denominated sins, then all the cruelties that were in deed inflicted by it on the various animals which it had seized during the course of its whole life—then would these be the actual sins of its history in

the world. It is evident that these might vary in number and in circumstances, with different individuals of the same tribe; and yet both of them have the same strength of native disposition towards cruelty. Each in this case has an original tendency to sinning—a tendency that cometh direct out of the very frame and composition of the animal —So that if the fountain can be regarded separately from the rivulet—if the kind of tree can be considered as one thing, and the kind of fruit which it bears be considered as another—if a quality of inward temper, be a thing distinct from and antecedent to the ebullitions of it in deed and in performance; and this quality be diffused through a whole species, and as much born with each of its individuals as is the shape or are the members of its body—There may then be a real and philosophical foundation for that distinction between original and actual sin, which has been so much resisted by the disciples of our modern literature, and so much decried as the fiction of a barbarous theology.

It is thus that we verify the doctrine of original sin by experience. Should it be found true of every man, that he is actually a sinner—should this hold unexceptedly true with each individual of the human family—if in every country of the world, and in every age of the world's history, all who had grown old enough to be capable of showing themselves were transgressors against the law of God—and if among all the accidents and varieties of condition to which humanity is liable, each member of humanity still betook himself to his own wayward deviations from the rule of right—Then he sins,

not because of the mere perversity of his education —he sins, not solely because of the peculiar excitements to evil that have crossed his path—he sins, not only because of the noxious atmosphere he breathes, or the vitiating example that is on every side of him. But he sins, purely in virtue of his being a man. There is something in the very make and mechanism of his nature, which causes him to be a sinner—a moral virus infused into the first formation of each individual who is now born into our world. The innate and original disposition of man to sin, is just as firmly established by the sinful doings of all and each of the species—as the innate ferocity of the tiger is, by the way in which this quality breaks forth into actual exemplification on each individual of the tribe. If each man is a sinner, this is because of a pervading tendency to sin, that so taints and overspreads the whole nature, as to be present with every separate portion of it. And to assert the doctrine of original sin in these circumstances, is to do no more than to assert the reigning quality of any species, whether in the animal or the vegetable kingdom. It is to do no more than to affirm the ferocious nature of the tiger, or the odorous nature of the rose, or the poisonous nature of the foxglove. It is to reduce that which is true of every single specimen of our nature, into a general expression that we make applicable to the whole nature. And to talk of the original sin of our species, thereby intending to signify the existence of a prior and universal disposition to sin, is just as warrantable as to affirm the most certain laws, or the soundest classifications in Natural History.

Could another planet offer to our notice another family of rational beings, in form and in features and in faculties like our own—Did we see there the same accommodations which we occupy, and the same scenery that enriches our globe, with only this difference between the two tribes which each peopled its own world—that whereas in every single instance the former were all actually sinners, the latter were all actually righteous—Who would not infer an original difference of constitution, from this universal difference of conduct? Who would not infer a something that distinguished the nature of the one species from the nature of the other—the virulence of an evil principle spread over the whole of that race, in every single member of which you saw the outbreakings of evil; and an exemption from this deleterious principle in that race, in no one member of which you could notice a single deviation from the law of uprightness? Now this evil principle is neither more nor less than original sin, and actual sin is but the produce of it. And we have nothing to do but to ascertain that actual sin is universal, in order to infer the original sin of mankind—or such an unexcepted proneness of desire to sin in the human constitution, that no individual who wears that constitution is ever found in deed to abstain from it.

When one sees a delight in cruelty, on the part of every individual among a particular tribe of animals—who would ever hesitate to affirm, that cruelty was the native and universal characteristic of the tribe,—that this entered into the primary composition of that kind of living creature, insomuch

that it may be safely predicted of every future specimen which shall be brought into the world, that this hateful quality will be found to adhere to it? By ascribing to the whole species an original propensity to cruelty, you are only stating a general fact by a general expression. And you do no more, when you ascribe to our species an original propensity to sin—inferring from the general fact, that all men have sinned, such a constitutional tendency to evil as makes you confidently aver, not merely of the past but also of all the future individuals of our race, that all men will sin. This is the doctrine of original sin, in as far as it affirms the existence of a prior tendency to sin, among all the members of the great family of mankind—a doctrine affirmed in the Bible; and confirmed by human experience, if the fact is made out, that there is not a man in our world who liveth and sinneth not.

There is not enough, it may be thought, of evidence for this fact, in the record of those more glaring enormities, which give to the general history of the world so broad an aspect of wicked and unprincipled violence. It is all true, that, in the conspicuous movement of nations, justice is often thrown aside, and robbery spreads its cruel excesses over the families of a land, and revenge satiates her thirst in the blood of provinces; so that man, when let loose from the restraints of earthly law, proves how slender a hold the law of God has in his heart, or the law of revelation has upon his conscience. Still the actors in the great national drama of the world are comparatively few; and though satisfied from the style of their performances, that

many more would just feel alike and do alike in the same circumstances—there is yet room for affirming, that, in the unseen privacies of social and domestic life, there may arise many a beauteous specimen of unstained worth and unblemished piety; and that, among the descendants of our arraigned species, some are to be found, who pass a guileless and a perfect life in this world; and in whose characters even the Judge who sitteth above cannot detect a single flaw, upon which to exclude them from the sinless abodes of paradise. It is quite impossible, you will perceive, to meet this affirmation, by successively passing all the individuals of our race before you; and pointing to the eye of your observation, the actual iniquity of the heart or life, which proves their relationship as the corrupt members of a corrupt family. But there is another way of meeting it. You cannot make all men manifest to each man, but you may make each man manifest to himself. You may make an appeal to his own conscience, and put him to his defence, if he is able for it, against the imputation that he too is a sinner. In defect of evidence for this upon his outward history, you may accompany him to that place where the emanating fountain of sin is situated. You may enter along with him into the recesses of his own heart, and there detect the unfailing preference that is given by it to its own will—the constant tendency it has, to impel its possessor to walk in his own way—the slight and rarely occasional hold that the authority of God has over it — its almost utter emptiness of desire towards Him, insomuch that His law is de-

throned from its habitual ascendancy, and the sense of Him is banished from our habitual recollections. He may spurn at injustice, and blush at indelicacy, and recoil from open profanation, and weep at human suffering; and yet, withal, he may forget and disown God. Not one hour of his life, from one end to the other of it, may have been filled with any one business which God had set him to, just as a master sets his servant to a task. He may have been some hours at church; but custom set him to it. Or he may have been officiating as long in the services of a fellow-creature; but native humanity set him to it. Or he may labour all week long for the subsistence of his family; but instinctive affection set him to it. Or he may engage in many a right and useful enterprise; but a feeling of propriety, or a constitutional love of employment, or a tenderness for his own reputation set him to it. We dispute not, as we have often told you, the power and the reality of many principles in the heart of man, most amiable in their character, most salutary in their operation, but which work at the same time their whole influence upon his conduct—without the reverence, and without the recognition of God. It is this which can be fastened, we affirm, on every son and daughter of Adam. It is, that the Being who made us is unminded by us. It is, that the element of human nature is an element of ungodliness. It is, that though the wayward heart of man goes forth by many different ways to the object it is most set upon—yet in no one of them, is its habitual tendency heavenward or Godward. From such a fountain, innumerable are the streams

of disobedience which will issue; and though many of them may not be so deeply tinged with the hue of disobedience as others—yet still in the fountain itself there is the principle of independence upon God, of unconcern about God. Put out our planet with its rational inhabitants by the side of another, where all felt the same delight in God that angels feel, and in every movement they made caught their impulse from a full sense of God as the bidder of it; and, though each business on which they set out was a task put into their hands, gave their intense presecution to it, not with the feeling of its being a drudgery, but with a feeling of delight. Let a difference so palpable between the two human generations of the two worlds be exhibited—as that in the one, God is out of the eye and out of the remembrance of His creatures; and in the other, God is ever felt to be present, and the will of all whom He has there made is the will of Him who made them. Are you to say of such a difference that it has no cause? Is it merely a fortuitous thing, that all without exception in the one place should walk in the counsel of their own ungodly hearts, and in the other should walk as the devoted subjects of a Divine and Almighty Sovereign? Are we to be so unphilosophical as to affirm, that such a distinction as this is but a random contingency, which can be traced to no origin, and is referable to no principle whatever? Must there not be a something in the original make and constitution of the two families, to account for such a total and unexcepted diversity as has been noticed by the eye of observation? Where is the error of saying that there

is a prior corrupt tendency in the one world, which does not exist in the other? And so far have we explained what is meant by the original sin that is charged upon mankind, when we affirmed it to be that constitutional proneness to evil in virtue of which all men are sinners.

We are quite aware, that the principle, on which we would convince the whole world of sin, is but faintly recognized, and therefore feebly felt, by many of the most eloquent expounders of human virtue; that, indignant as they are against the vices which bear injuriously upon themselves, they have no sense of the injury done to God by the disregard and the forgetfulness of His own creatures; that they would tolerate all the impiety there is in the world, if there was only force enough in the moral vehemence of their own powerful and pathetic appeals, to school away all its cruelty and selfishness and fraud. And therefore it is, that we hold it indeed a most valid testimony in behalf of our doctrine—when those very men who undertake to tutor the species in virtue apart from godliness, and apart from the methodism of the gospel, are rendered heartless by disappointment; and take revenge upon their disciples by pouring forth the effusions of bitterest misanthropy against them. It would look as if even on their own ground, the tenet of original sin might find enough of argument and countenance to make it respectable. Rousseau was one of those to whom we allude. He may be regarded as having, in effect, abjured Christianity, and betaken himself to the enterprise of humanizing the world on other principles; and from the

bower of romance and sensibility, did he send forth the lessons, that were to recall our wandering race to the primitive innocence, from which art and science and society had seduced them; and, year after year, did he ply all Europe with the spells of a most magical and captivating eloquence. Nor were there wanting many admirers who worshipped him while he lived; and who, when he died, went like devotees on a pilgrimage to his tomb. And they too had the fondness to imagine, that the conceptions of his wondrous mind were the germs of a great moral revolution, that was awaiting our species. But the ill-fated Rousseau himself, lived long enough to mourn over the vanity of his own beauteous speculations; and was heard to curse the very nature he had so long idolized; and, instead of humanity capable of being raised to the elevation of a godlike virtue, did he himself pronounce of humanity that it was deeply tainted with some sore and irrecoverable disease. And it is indeed a striking attestation from him to the depravity of our race, that, ere he ended his career, he became sick of that very world which he had vainly tried to regenerate—renouncing all brotherhood with his own species, and loudly proclaiming to all his fellows how much he hated and execrated and abjured them.

What Rousseau is in prose, Lord Byron is in poetry. Only he never aimed to better a world, of which he seldom spoke but in the deep and bitter derision of a heart that utterly despised it—not because of its ungodliness, for it is not this which calls forth the vindictiveness of his most appalling abjurations. But it is obviously his feeling of hu-

manity, that its whole heart is sick and its whole head is sore; that some virus of deep and deadly infusion pervades the whole extent of it; and never is he more in his own favourite element, than when giving back to the world from his own pages, the reflected image of that guilt which troubles and deforms it. One should have liked to see a mind so powerful as his, led to that secret of this world's depravity, which is only revealed unto babes, while hid in a veil of apparent mysticism from the wise and the prudent. And yet even as it is, does he, in the wild and frenzied career of his own imagination, catch a passing glimpse of the truth that he had not yet apprehended.

"Our life is a false nature—'tis not in
The harmony of things—this hard decree,
This uneradicable taint of sin,
This boundless Upas, this all-blasting tree,
Whose root is earth, whose leaves and branches be
The skies, which rain their plagues on man like dew,
Disease, death, bondage, all the woes we see,
And even the woes we see not, which throb through
The immedicable soul, with heart-aches ever new."

It has turned out as we apprehended. We have said enough for one address; and yet we have not been able to pass away from the first branch of the subject of original sin, even the sinful tendency which exists, as a native and constitutional attribute of our species, and has been denominated the corruption of our species. We cannot at present afford so much as one sentence on the other branch of the subject, which is original sin in respect of the guilt of it; and under which we may have to advance a few remarks, for elucidating what has

been termed the imputation of Adam's sin to all his posterity. It is evident that the two topics of the existence of original sin and the guilt of it, are distinct from one another; and they lead to distinct practical consequences. The only one we shall urge upon you just now, is, that, however much poetry and philosophy and eloquence may have failed in their attempts to extirpate the moral disorders of our world,—this is the very enterprise which the gospel of Jesus Christ has embarked upon; and on the success of which, in the case of all who truly submit to its lessons, it has adventured the whole credit of its divinity and its truth. We mistake Christianity, if we think that it only provides an expiation, to do away the guilt of our original depravity. It provides a regenerating influence, to do away its existence. It does something more than demonstrate the evil malady of our nature. It will not be satisfied with any thing short of destroying it. For this purpose it brings a new and a powerful element into living play with the original elements of our constitution; and with these it sustains a combat that may well be denominated a war of extermination. The moralists of our age, whether in lessons from the academic chair, or by the insinuating address of fiction and poetry—while they try to mend and to embellish human life, have never struck one effective blow at that ungodliness of the heart, which is the germ of all the distempers in human society. It is against this that the gospel aims its decisive thrust, as at the very seed and principle of the mischief. It combats the disease in its original elements; and,

instead of idly attempting to intercept or turn aside the stream of this sore corruption, it makes head against that fortress where the emanating fountain of the distemper lies. For this purpose, the truths which it reveals, and the weapons which it employs, and the expedients which it puts into operation—nay, the very terms of that vocabulary which it uses, are almost strikingly contrasted both with the conceptions and the phraseology of general literature. There is nothing, there is positively nothing, in that general literature, the profest object of which too is to moralize our species—about the blood of an everlasting covenant; or the path of reconciliation with God, by an offered and appointed mediatorship; or the provision of a sanctifying Spirit, by which there is infused into our nature, a counteracting virtue to all the sinfulness that abounds in it. We have already had proof for the utter impotency of all that has issued from the schools of sentiment and philosophy. Should not this shut us up, at least to the experiment of this very peculiar gospel, which offers to guide the world to a consummation that hitherto has been so very hopeless? Let each, at all events, try it for himself. Let each here present, whose conscience has responded to the charge of ungodliness, feel himself drawn to an expedient, by which this most obstinate of all tendencies may at length be overcome. And for your encouragement at the outset, let us announce to you, that this said gospel justifies the ungodly. Even now acceptance is offered to you. Even now reconciliation may be entered on, and that without waiting till the heart has given up its practical and

deep-rooted atheism. The first act to which you are called, is an act of agreement with the God whom you have so totally renounced, in the habit and history of your past life. The blood of Christ, if you will only take heart and believe in it, washes away the guilt of all this sinfulness; and the promise that He gives to those who trust in Him is, that He will turn away ungodliness from Jacob—sealing those who believe with the Holy Spirit; and thus causing them to love and honour and serve the God, from whom they were aforetime so widely and so wretchedly alienated.

LECTURE XXIV.

ROMANS, v, 12—21.

"Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned: (for until the law sin was in the world: but sin is not imputed when there is no law. Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression, who is the figure of him that was to come. But not as the offence, so also is the free gift. For if through the offence of one many be dead, much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, which is by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many. And not as it was by one that sinned, so is the gift: for the judgment was by one to condemnation, but the free gift is of many offences unto justification. For if by one man's offence death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ.) Therefore as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life. For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners; so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous. Moreover the law entered, that the offence might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound: that as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord."

In our last discourse we attempted to show in how far the doctrine of the Bible, respecting the existence of a corrupt tendency in our race, met and was at one with human observation. This is clearly a question that may be brought to such a tribunal. Whether a sinful disposition exists and is universal among men, is matter of experience as well as of divine revelation. That this corruption exists in the world, is matter of experience. But how it

entered into the world is altogether a matter of testimony. It is an historical fact, which must be exhibited to us in a credible record, ere we can come to the knowledge or the belief of it. We cannot confront it with anything that now passes before our eyes—it being a solitary event of great antiquity, and which has no proper evidence to rest upon save the information of history.

'By one man,' says our text, 'sin entered into the world.' He came out pure and righteous from the hand of God; but Adam, after he had yielded to the temptation of the garden, was a changed man, from Adam in his days of innocence in Paradise. He gathered a different hue in consequence; and that hue was permanent; and while we are told that God made man at first after His own image, we are further told that the very first person who was born into the world, came to it in the image of his parent—not in the original, but in the transformed image, that is, with the whole of that tendency to sin, which, on the first act of sin, was formed in the character of Adam, and was transmitted through him to all his posterity.

This is the simple statement; and we are not able to give the explanation. The first tree of a particular species, may be conceived to have come from the Creator's hand, with the property of bearing fruit, of the sweetest taste, and most exquisite flavour. A pestilential gust may have passed over it, and so changed its nature, that all the fruit it was afterwards to bear should be sour and unsavoury. After this change, it may be conceived to have dropt its seeds or its acorns; and

such may the virulence of the transformation have been, that all the future trees which are to be propagated from the parent stock, rise not in the original but transformed likeness of the tree from which they sprung. If this were credibly attested as a fact, we are certainly not prepared to resist it. We have no such acquaintance with the physiology of the vegetable world, as to affirm, in the face of good historical testimony, that this is impossible; and as little are we entitled, from any acquaintance with the law of transmission from father to son, in the department of animal and intelligent nature, to set ourselves in opposition to that Bible narrative, by which we are given to understand, that a moral blight came over the character of our great progenitor; and that, when so reduced and deteriorated in his better qualities, a race of descendants proceeded from him, with that very taint of degeneracy that he had taken on; that the evil thus superinduced on the nature of the first man, was transmitted to all the men whom he originated —who, of course, instead of being fruitful in righteousness, yielded in their lives the bitter produce of many actual transgressions, of much visible and abounding iniquity.

There is another fact announced to us in this passage, and that is, the connection between the corruption of our nature, and its mortality. Sin brought death into the world; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned. This brings out to view in another way, the distinction that we have endeavoured to impress between actual and original sin. All have not sinned after

the similitude of Adam's transgression; and yet death reigneth too over them. All have not sinned by a positive deed of disobedience. Infants have not thus sinned; and yet infants die. The death that they undergo is not the fruit of any actual iniquity of theirs; but the fruit of that moral virus, which has descended from the common fountain of our species, and which taints and vilifies, and transmits the elements of decay and destructibleness, among all the members of it. They have never done what is sinful; and yet they have that of sin in them which carries death in its train. And what is this but the corrupt tendency that we have all along insisted on; the original and constitutional aptitude that there is to sinning, in virtue of which we may compute, with all the firmness of certainty, that, when the time of bringing forth cometh, transgression is the fruit that they will bear—a disposition that only yet exists in embryo, but which will come out into deed and development, so soon as powers and opportunities are expanded. The infant tiger has not yet performed one act of ferocity; but we are sure that all the rudiments of ferocity exist in its native constitution; and that the original principle of this quality, long before it has been unfolded into actual development, lurks in it from its birth, and only waits its growth and its maturity till it come out into exhibition. The tender sapling of the crab-tree, has not yet yielded one sour apple; but we most certainly know, that there is even from the minutest germ of its existence, an organic necessity for its producing this kind of fruit, when time has con-

ducted it onward to this period of its history. And, in like manner, the infant of a week old has not broken one of the commandments; but well may we infer, from the universality of sin in our species, that, should it rise to boyhood, there is that in its disposition now, which will advance and ripen into disobedience then. And should the hand of death arrest it in its career, and by its preventing stroke snatch it away from the possibility of ever committing one action of iniquity; and it be asked, how it is that the connection between sin and the suffering of death is exemplified in the fate of this poor innocent—we would reply, that though the mischief had not exploded in its history, yet the whole elements of the mischief lay slumbering in its heart; and, though it could not be said to die because of actual transgression, yet it shared in the common calamity with the rest of the species, because, with the rest of the species, it had its full share of the original tendency to evil.

One knows not how soon it is, that this tendency breaks forth into open exhibition. One never saw and hardly can conceive, how a babe of unspotted descent, would have proved from the first day which ushered it into being, that it had no fellowship in that corrupt principle, which taints from very infancy all the families of our earthly generation. In a very few years, the difference would be palpable—even as the Saviour, both in boyhood and in manhood, stood distinguished from all the partakers of that nature, whose sufferings He bore but whose sins He had no share in. We have a full record of His bright example, when He reached

the maturity of His human powers; but it must be matter of curiosity, and not of edification, that we have no record of His tone and habit and character in infancy. One would like if he could, to lift the veil which hangs over the experience of Mary; and to learn of her, who had the maternal care and guidance of the holy child Jesus; and to know what was the precise complexion of that moral dawn, which preceded the pure and perfect effulgence that shone forth on the history of His riper years; and to be told how richly all her tenderness was repaid, by smiles more lovely than ever before had played on the infant countenance —and, in His hours of anguish, by such a calm and unruffled serene, as not one cry of impatience, and not one movement of fretfulness or wrath ever broke in upon. But it is vain to pry into the secret of that alone sinless infancy which the world ever saw; and we have only to assure ourselves of all other children, that, helpless as they are in person, and dear to a parent's fondest regards from that very helplessness—the germ of depravity is already in their hearts. And whether or not we should put to the account of this, the boisterous outcry of an infant, and the ever-recurring turmoil wherewith it clamours abroad all its desires and all its disappointments, and the constant exactions it makes of every thing it sees to its own wayward appetite for indulgence, and its spurning impatience of all resistance and control; so as in fact to subordinate the whole household to its caprices, and be the little tyrant to whose brief but most effective authority the entire circle of relationship

must bend—whether these be symptomatic or not of that disease wherewith humanity is infected in all its members, still we must admit, that the disease is radically there; and however it may brood for a season, in a sort of ambiguous concealment, among the inscrutable and unrevealed mysteries of an infant's spirit—yet soon do the selfishness and the sensuality and the ungodliness come out at length into such open declaration, as indeed to prove to every calm and philosophic observer of our nature, that one and all of us are born in sin, and all of us are shapen in iniquity.

You will be at no loss then to conceive the distinction between original and actual sin. The one is the tendency to sin in the constitution—the other is the outbreaking of that tendency in the conduct; and if sinful conduct be universal, we infer a sinful constitution to be universal also. And you will be as little at a loss to perceive, how the original sin of every human creature is coeval with the first moment of his existence, and enters as much among the elements of his formation—as the tendency to bear a particular kind of fruit, lies incorporated with the very acorn from which the tree has germinated. We know not whether, upon the introduction of sin, the sentence of mortality was made to pass on the vegetable, as well as on the animal creation; or whether, had we lived in an unfallen world, its plants as well as its people would have been immortal. But such is in fact the organic structure of both, that both are liable to dissolution; and whether they die ere the one has come forth with its fruit of palpable iniquity, and the

other with its apple of discernible flavour—whether nipped in infancy, or withered into final extinction after having passed through all the stages of growth and of decay—we never think of ascribing this sweeping and universal destruction to any other cause, than to a universal something in the original frame of all the individuals that are subject to this sore fatality: And whether it be the grandfather bowed down under the weight of years, or the babe of a week old that breathes its last, it is the same deadly virus that carries off them both—the poison of an accursed nature, that only needs the scope of opportunity for the development of all the plagues and all the perversities which belong to it.

We trust, then, that we may have made it clear to your apprehension, how there exists in the human constitution from the very first, a tendency to sin; and that this tendency has a forth-coming in sinful actions, with every individual of our race, who lives a few years in the world—just as the tendency in the crab-tree to produce sour apples, has its forth-coming in the appearance of this very fruit, after the time of bearing has arrived. The tendency in both has come down, through a long series of intermediate parents; and may be traced in each, to the tendency of one great progenitor, whether of the human or of the vegetable species. Thus far then have we got in our argument—even that original sin, as it respects the inborn depravity of our race, is at one with the actual experience of mankind. And we should further proceed to show, in how far original sin, as it respects not its actual existence in our frames, but as it respects the im-

putation of guilt to all who are under it, is at one with the moral sense of mankind. And then would we propose to finish all our preliminaries to the exposition of the passage before us, by replying to the invectives which have been founded upon this doctrine against the character of God. But we have already consumed too much of your time for entering at present on topics so unwieldy; and we shall therefore confine the remainder of the address to such practical enforcements, as may be educed from the explanation that we have already attempted in your hearing.

The first consideration we shall address to you is, what a testimony to God's irreconcilable antipathy against sin, that he has made death to follow invariably in its train—that because there is in these bodies of ours a tendency to moral evil, these bodies must therefore be dissolved—that such is the blasting influence of this sore contagion, as to wither and sicken every individual whom it touches, and be unto him the unfailing poison, under the virulence of which he sooner or later must expire —that though it was by the narrow inlet of one temptation, that sin found entrance into our world at the first, and was thence diffused as if by pestilence throughout the whole extent of our putrescent nature, yet, widely as it has ranged abroad over the entire domain of humanity, and unsparingly as it has attacked every single member of it, yet it goes nowhere, without carrying the curse of mortality along with it; and on account of this does each successive generation, but moulder back again into the dust out of which it had arisen. It would

look, that, as if to detach this leprosy from our constitution, the old materials of the old framework must be beaten into powder, and be made to pass through some purifying ordeal in the sepulchre. And it is indeed an impressive exhibition of the malignity of sin, to think that because of it and of it alone, all nature is suffering violence—when we see death thus making its relentless sweep among all ages; and even before it be possible to evince sin in the conduct, as with the infant of a day old, yet it is enough that there be sin in the constitution, to bring this almost unconscious babe within the operation of a sentence, which grants no reprieve, which knows no exception.

But secondly, this deep view of our disease, however much it may look an inapplicable speculation in the eyes of many, yet, if rightly improved, would lead in fact to a deep view of the remedy that was suited to it. The man who looks upon sin as a mere affair of accident or education, may think, that, by the putting forth a more strenuous determination against it—by bringing the energies of the inward will to bear upon the outward walk—he may suppress the moral evil at least of his own character, and achieve for himself an exemption and a victory. But the man who looks upon this sin as a constitutional taint, fixed upon him from very infancy, and pervading all the recesses of his frame—who recognizes the will itself to be corrupt, and that when it comes to be a question between God and His gifts, it is only to the latter, and not at all to the former that he has any inclination—when he finds that the dark hue of an

original and inborn sinfulness adheres to him, just as the spots do to the leopard, and the tawny skin which no superficial operation can do away, does to the Ethiopian—Then, if he have any depth of reflection, he will conclude, that, in such circumstances, he is really not warranted to turn away from that remedy which the gospel proposes, as the grand specific for all our moral and all our spiritual disorders. The whole range of human power and human experience supplies him with nothing, that can purge away the foul inveteracy wherewith his nature is stained; and he just follows in the legitimate track of a rightly exercised and rightly discerning judgment, when he is shut up unto the faith. More particularly, will such a man hold it to be indeed worthy of all acceptation, when he reads of a new birth being indispensable; nor will he recoil, as many do, with sensitive dislike from the doctrine of regeneration; nor will he look upon it in any other light, than as the prescription of a wise physician, who has probed the patient's disease to its bottom, and finds it to be indeed engrained among the first elements of the constitution of our nature. He will rather do homage to the penetration of this physician when he affirms, that the fruit is corrupt, just because the tree is corrupt; and that an operation must be gone through, far more radical than any which lies within the compass of unaided humanity; that a new creation must issue forth from Him, who holds the creative faculty altogether in His own hands; that ere the fruit can be made good, the tree must be made good. And thus it is, that the man who

looks to the fall in all its consequences; and to the transmitted depravity of nature, running throughout all the men of all the generations of our world; and to the utter impossibility of this sore corruption being dislodged by the determining energy of man's will, because the corruption has in fact got hold of the will itself, and determines it only to evil and that continually—such a man no longer marvels with the incredulity of Nicodemus, when he is told that flesh and blood shall not inherit the kingdom of God; and that unless he is born again and born of the Spirit, he never can see that kingdom.

Lastly, it may be replied, What is to be done? To believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, is the thing that is to be done. This is the specific, and that not for guilt merely, but also for corruption. You may think it too simple an affair for landing you in so mighty a consummation. Make it a more strenuous affair, by putting your own puny efforts to the stretch of their uttermost activity, and you never will succeed. The Syrian thought it too simple an affair, when asked to bathe in the waters of Jordan for his leprosy. Nevertheless, he did it and his leprosy left him. You will see God in a new light, if you look to Him as reflected from the glass of the offered mediatorship. If we can turn you from the hatred of God to the love of Him, this would be to regenerate you; and we ask you to look unto God as God in Christ reconciling the world, and the change from hatred to love is accomplished. Those dark clouds which have hitherto lowred upon you from the pavilion of His

lofty residence, will forthwith be dissipated. You will then see that all majestic as He is, and awfully as that majesty has been illustrated by the account that has been made for sin—yet there is a mercy too, which shines forth in the midst of His other attributes, and rejoices over them. You will love the God who first loved you; and that unfailing promise, that He who gave His own Son, will also freely give us all things, shall so invite the prayers and the dependence of every believing soul, that the Spirit given to those who ask it, will be given unto him; and he, gradually formed after the lost image of the Godhead, will become a new creature —meet for the inheritance of the saints in light; meet for the enjoyment of that Paradise, where sin and sorrow and suffering are unknown.

We have all along, upon this subject, proceeded on the constitutional tendency that there is to sin in our nature being one thing, and the guilt chargeable upon us for having such a tendency being another. The question, how far a native and original depravity exists among mankind is one thing. The question, how far mankind are justly liable to be reckoned with, or to be dealt with as responsible and worthy of punishment for having such a tendency, is another. We have already spoken abundantly to the fact of the actual depravity—announced to us most explicitly in the Bible, and confirmed to us most entirely and universally by personal observation. In as far as the doctrine of original sin affirms a native disposition to sin, and a disposition so strong in all as that all are sinners

—then is the doctrine at one with experience. But in as far as the doctrine affirms, that there is a blame or a demerit rightly attachable to man for having such a disposition, or that he is to be held a guilty and condemned creature on account of it —this is a question referable not to the experience of man, but to the moral sense of man. The experience of man takes cognizance of the question whether such a thing is; and so is applicable to the question whether a depraved tendency to moral evil is or is not in the human constitution. The moral sense of man takes cognizance of the question, whether such a thing ought to be; and is therefore applicable to the question, whether man ought to be held and dealt with as a criminal on account of a tendency which came unbidden by him into the world—which entered among the first elements of his constitution, without ever consulting him or asking any leave from him upon the subject—which he derived, not by choice but by inheritance, and over which he had no more control than he had over the properties of the air which he breathed, or the milk which nourished him. We feel that we are touching on the borders of a very profound, and what to most is a very unfathomable speculation—But yet we would not have ventured so far—had we not both conceived it due to scriptural truth, which we think ought to be firmly and fearlessly expounded, up to the full amount of all that is revealed to us; and had we not furthermore conceived the whole exposure of our disease and misery, to have a deciding influence on him who still hesitates about the remedy

of the gospel—not very sure perhaps, whether he is altogether welcome to the use of it; not very sure perhaps whether he altogether stands in urgent and indispensable need of it.

To determine the question then, in how far the attaching of demerit to a sinful nature that man has brought with him into the world is agreeable to the moral sense of mankind—we should enquire how much or how little man requires to have within his view, ere his moral sense shall pronounce on the character either of any act or of any disposition that is submitted to his notice. One may see a dagger projected from behind a curtain, and in the firm grasp of a human hand, and directed with sure and deadly aim against the bosom of an unconscious sleeper; and, seeing no more, he would infer of the individual who held this mortal weapon, that he was an assassin, and that he deserved the death of an assassin. Had he seen all, he might have seen that this seeming agent of the murder which had just been perpetrated, was in fact a struggling and overpowered victim, in the hands of others—that he, the friend of the deceased was pitched upon, in the spirit of diabolic cruelty, as the unwilling instrument of the deed which he abhorred—that for this purpose, the fatal knife was clasped or fastened to his hand; and his voice was stifled by violence; and he was borne in deepest silence to the spot by the strength of others; and there was he, in most revolting agony of heart, compelled to thrust forward his passive or rather his resisting arm, and immediately to strike the exterminating blow into the bosom of a much-

loved companion. Who does not see that the moral sense, when these new circumstances come into view, would instantly amend or rather reverse, and that totally, the former decision which it had passed upon the subject—that he, whom it deemed the murderer and chargeable with all the guilt of so foul an atrocity, it would most readily absolve from all the blame and all the condemnation—that it would transfer the charge to those who were behind him, and pronounce them to be the murderers—that he who held the dagger and performed the deed was innocent of all its turpitude, because the victim of a necessity which he could not help, and against which he had wrought and wrestled in vain? and thus, ere it passes such a sentence as it feels to be righteous, must it look not merely to the act but to the intention, not merely to the work of the hand but to the will of the heart which prompted it.

Now if we have any right consciousness of our own moral feelings, or any right observation of the moral feelings of others, the mind of man, in order to be made up as to the moral character of any act that is submitted to its notice, needs to know what the intention was that originated the act, but needs no more. It makes no enquiry as to what that was which originated the intention. Give it simply to understand, that such is the intention of a man who is not under derangement, and therefore knows what he is purposing and what he is doing; and then, without looking farther, the moral sense comes at once to its summary estimate of the moral character of that which is under con-

temptation. Let us see a man who has done a murderous act, in the circumstances which we have just now specified; and we do not look upon him as a criminal, because we find that the act originated in the will of others and against his own will. Let us see a man who has done a murderous act, and was instigated thereto by a murderous disposition, and we cannot help looking upon him as a criminal—finding as we do that the act originated in his own will. An act against the will indicates no demerit on the part of him who performed it. But an act with the will gives us the full impression of demerit. The philosopher may amuse himself with the ulterior query, What was it that originated the will? But the peasant has no metaphysics and no speculation for entertaining such a topic—And yet he has just as fresh and just as enlightened a sense of the demerit of a bad action coming from a bad intention, as the most curious and contemplative enquirer has—whose less appetite is ever carrying him upward among the remote and hidden principles of the phenomena that are around him. To get a right moral estimate of any given act, we must carry our view up from the act of the hand to the disposition of the heart; but we need to carry it up no farther. The moment that the disposition is seen, the moral sense is correspondingly affected; and rests its whole estimation, whether of merit or of demerit, not on the anterior cause which gave origin to the disposition, but on the character which it now bears, or the aspect under which it is now seen and contemplated before you.

How the disposition got there is not the question, which the moral sense of man, when he is unvitiated by a taste for speculation, takes any concern in. It is enough for the moral sense, that the disposition is there. One may conceive, with the Manicheans of old, two eternal Beings—one of whom was essentially wicked and malignant and impure, and the other of whom was essentially good and upright and compassionate and holy from everlasting. We could not tell how these opposite dispositions got there, for there they behoved to be from the unfathomable depths of the eternity that is behind us—yet that would not hinder us from regarding the one as an object of moral hatefulness and dislike, and the other as an object of moral esteem and moral approbation. It is enough that the dispositions exist; and it matters not how they originated, or if ever they had an origin at all. And, in like manner, give us two human individuals—one of whom is revengeful and dishonest and profligate and sensual, and the other of whom is kind and generous and honourable and godly—Our moral sense on the simple exhibition of these two characters, leads us to regard the one as blameable and the other as praiseworthy—the one as rightly the object of condemnation and punishment, and the other as rightly the object of approval and reward. And in so doing, it does not look so far back, as to the primary or originating cause of the distinction that obtains between these two characters. It looks as far back, as to reach its contemplation from the act of the outer man to the disposition of the inner man; but there it stops. Give to its view a wrong

act originating in a wrong intention; and it asks no more to make up its estimate of the criminality of what has been offered to its notice. It troubles not itself with the metaphysics of prior and originating causes; and, however the deed in question may have originated, let it simply have emanated from a concurring disposition on the part of him who has performed it, and be a deed of wickedness —then does it conclude that the man has done wickedly and that he should be dealt with accordingly.

We know very well what it is, that stumbles so readily the speculative enquirer into this mystery. He thinks that a man born with a sinful disposition, is born with the necessity of sinning; and that to be under such a necessity, exempts him from all blame, and all imputation of guiltiness in having sinned. But so long as he is under this feeling, he is in fact, though not very conscious of the delusion, he is in fact confounding two things which are distinct the one from the other. He is confounding the necessity that is against the will, with the necessity that is with the will. The man who struggled against the external force, that compelled him to thrust a dagger into the bosom of his friend, was operated upon by a necessity that was against his will; and you exempt him from all charge of criminality in the matter. But the man who does the very same thing at the spontaneous bidding of his own heart — whose will prompted him to the act, and who gave his consent and his choice to this deed of enormity—this is the man whom you irresistibly condemn, and you irresistibly recoil from. With such a disposition

as he had, it was perhaps unavoidable; but the very having of such a disposition, makes him in your eye a monster of moral deformity. If there was a kind of necessity here, it was a necessity of an essentially different sort from the one we have just now specified, and ought therefore not to be confounded with it. It is necessity with the will, and not against it; and by the law both of God and man, the act he has committed is a crime and he is treated as a criminal.

The only necessity which excuses a man for doing what is evil, is a necessity that forces him by an external violence to do it, against the bent of his will struggling most honestly and determinedly to resist it. But if it be with the bent of the will, if the necessity he lies under of doing the evil thing consists in this, that his will is strongly and determinedly bent upon the doing of it—then such a necessity as this, so far from extenuating the man's guiltiness, just aggravates it the more, and stamps upon it, in all plain moral estimation, a character of fouller atrocity. For set before us two murderers, and the one of them differing from the other in the keenness and intensity of his thirst for blood. We have already evinced to you, how there is one species of necessity which extinguishes the criminality of the act altogether—even that necessity which operates with violence upon the muscles of the body, and overbears the moral desires and tendency of the mind. But there is another species of necessity, which heightens the criminality of murder—even that necessity, which lies in the taste and tendency of the mind towards this deed of

unnatural violence. And if of these two assassins of the cave or of the highway, the one was pointed out to us who felt the most uncontrollable impulse towards so fell a perpetration; and to whom the fears and the cries and the agonies of the trembling victim, ministered the most savage complacency—he of the two, even in spite of the greater inward necessity that lay upon him, he, in the breast of every plain and unsophisticated man, would raise the sensations of keenest indignancy; and be regarded by all as the one, whom the voice of justice most loudly demanded, as a sacrifice to the peace and the protection of society.

It is enough then that a disposition to moral evil exists; and however it originated, the disposition in itself, with all the evil acts which emanate therefrom, calls forth, by the law of our moral nature, a sentiment of blame or reprobation. It may have been acquired by education; or it may have been infused into us by the force of surrounding example; or it may be the fruit, instead of the principle, of many wilful iniquities of conduct; or, finally, it may, agreeably to the doctrine of original sin, have been as much transmitted in the shape of a constitutional bias from father to son, as is the ferocity of a tiger, or the industry of an ant, or the acidity of an apple, or the odour and loveliness of a rose. When we look to the beauty of a flower, we feel touched and attracted by the mere exhibition of the object—nor is it necessary that we should know whence this property sprung into existence. When we taste the sourness of a particular fruit, it matters not to the sensation,

whether this unpleasant quality is due to the training of the tree, or to some accident of exposure it has met with, or finally to some inherent universal tendency diffused over the whole species, and derived through seeds and acorns from the trees of former generations. When assailed by the fury of some wild vindictive animal, we meet it with the same resentment, and inflict upon it the same chastisement or revenge—whether the malignant rage by which it is actuated, be the sin of its nature derived to it from inheritance, or the sin of its education derived to it from the perverse influence of the circumstances by which it has been surrounded. And lastly, when moral corruption is offered to our notice in the character of man—when we see a depraved will venting itself forth in deeds of depravity—when, in every individual we meet with, we behold an ungodliness or a selfishness or a deceit or an impurity, which altogether make the moral scenery of earth, so widely different from the moral scenery of heaven—It positively makes no difference to your feeling of loathsomeness and culpability, wherewith we regard it—whether the vitiating taint rises anew on every single specimen of humanity; or whether it has run in one descending current from the progenitor of our race, and thence spread the leprosy of moral evil over all succeeding generations. The doctrine of original sin leaves the distinction between virtue and vice just where it found it; nor does it affect the sense of moral approbation wherewith we regard the former, or the moral dislike and feeling of demerit in which the latter ought to be regarded.

If it be asked how this can be, we reply that we do not know—that so it is we know, but how it is we do not know. It is not the only instance in which we are compelled to stop short at ultimate facts of which we can offer no other explanation than that simply such is the case; or, rather, it is like in this respect to every other department which nature and experience offer to human contemplation. We can no more account for our physical, than we can account for our moral sensations. When we eat the fruit of the bitter orange-tree we feel the bitterness; but we do not know how this sensation upon our palate, stands connected with a constitutional property in the tree, which has descended to it through a long line of ancestry, from the creation of the world. And when we look to the bitter fruit of transgression on the life and character of any individual of the human species, and feel upon our moral sense a nauseating revolt from the odious spectacle—we do not know how this impression upon the taste of the inner man, stands connected with a natural tendency which is exemplified by all, and has been derived through a series of many centuries from the parent stock of the great human family. But certain it is that the origin of our depravity, has nothing to do with the sense and feeling of its loathsomeness, wherewith we regard it. And let that depravity have been transmitted to us from Adam, or be a kind of spontaneous and independent production on each of his children—still we cannot look to it without moral censure and moral condemnation.

There is not a more effectual way of bringing

this to the test, than by making one man the object of injustice and of provocation from another man. Let a neighbour inflict upon any of you some moral wrong or moral injury—will not the quick and ready feeling of resentment rise immediately in your hearts? Will you stop to enquire whence your enemy has derived the malice, or the selfishness, under which you suffer? Is it not simply enough that he tramples upon your rights and interests, and does so wilfully—is not this of itself enough to call out the sudden reaction of an angry judgment, and a keen retaliation upon your part? If it be under some necessity which operates against his disposition, this may soften your resentment. But if it be under that kind of necessity, which arises from the strength of his disposition to do you harm—this, so far from softening, would just whet and stimulate your resentment against him. So far from taking it as an apology, that he is forcibly constrained by the obstinate tendency of his will to injure and oppress you—this would just add to the exasperation of your feelings; and the more hearty a good-will you saw he had to hurt or to traduce or to defraud you, the more in fact would you hold him to be the culpable subject of your most just and righteous indignation. And thinkest thou, O man, who judgest another for his returns of unworthiness to you—that thou wilt escape the judgment of God, if thou makest the very same returns of unworthiness to Him? Out of your own mouth you will be condemned; and if, out of the sin of his original nature, your neighbour has ever done that which

you felt to be injurious and at which you were offended—then be assured that the plea of your original nature will never shield you from the curse and the condemnation due to the sins, which have emanated from that nature against God.

These remarks may prepare the way for all that man by his moral sense can understand or go along with, in the doctrine of the imputation of Adam's sin to all his posterity. We confess that we are not able to perceive, how one man is at all responsible for the personal doings of another whom he never saw, and who departed this life many centuries before him. But if the personal doings of a distant ancestor, have in point of fact corrupted his moral nature; and if this corruption has been transmitted to his descendants—then we can see how these become responsible, not for what their forefather did, but for what they themselves do under the corrupt disposition that they have received from their forefather. And if there be a guilt attachable to evil desires, as well as to evil doings; and if the evil desire which prompted Adam to his first transgression, enter into the nature of all his posterity—then we can see how his posterity should be the objects of moral blame and moral aversion, if not on account of the transgression which Adam committed, at least on account of such a wrong principle in their hearts, as would lead every one of them to the very same transgression in the very same circumstances. It is thus that Adam has transmitted a guilt the same with his own, as well as a depravity the same with his own, among all the individuals and families of our

species—if not that each of them is liable to a separate reckoning on account of the offence committed in the garden of Eden, at least that each of them is liable to a separate reckoning on account of his own separate and personal depravity—a depravity which had its rise in the offence that was then and there committed; and a depravity which would lead in every one instance to the same offence in the same circumstances of temptation. According to this explanation, every man still reapeth not what another soweth, but what he soweth himself. Every man eateth the fruit of his own doings. Every man beareth the burden of his own tainted and accursed nature. Every man suffereth for his own guilt and not for Adam's guilt; and if he is said to suffer for Adam's guilt, the meaning is, that, from Adam he inherits a corruption which lands him in a guilt equal to that of Adam.

It were correct enough to say, that the sin of Cataline, that great conspirator against the state, is imputable to an equally great conspirator of the present day—not that he is at all responsible for what Cataline did, but responsible for his own sin that was the same with that of Cataline. And it would strengthen the resemblance, if it was the recorded example of Cataline which filled him with a kindred disposition, and hurried him on to a kindred enterprise. Then as Adam was the efficient cause of our corruption, so Cataline was of his; but each suffers for the guilt of his own sin nevertheless—a guilt the same with us as that of Adam's, and the same with him as that of Cataline's.

Our Saviour cursed a fig-tree because of its barrenness. Conceive a fig-tree to be cursed because of the bitterness of its fruit. It is for its own bitter fruit, and not for the bitter fruit of its first ancestor, that it is laid under the doom which has been pronounced upon it. But still its first ancestor may have been a tree of sweetly-flavoured fruit at its first formation; and a pestilential gust may have passed over and tainted it; and it may, by the laws of physiological succession, have sent down its deteriorated nature among all its posterity; and it may be true of each individual descendant, that, while it is for its own qualities it is so loathed and so condemned, still was it from its great originating parent that it inherited the taint by which it has been vitiated, and the sentence by which it has been accursed.

Many, we are aware, carry the doctrine of imputation farther than this; and make each of us liable to answer at the bar of God's judicature for Adam's individual transgression. We shall only say of this view at present, that, whether it be scriptural or not, we are very sure that we cannot follow it by any sense of morality or rightfulness that is in our own heart. Still, even on this highest imagination of the doctrine, we hold the way of God to man, in all the bearings of this much agitated subject, to be capable of a most full and triumphant vindication; and with our attempt to evince this, we trust we shall be able in one address more, to finish all that is general and preliminary to the passage that is now before us. When we next resume this topic, we shall endeavour to si-

lence the rising murmurs, which we doubt not have been already felt in many a heart, on the hearing of the representation that we have now given—to prove that there is not an individual amongst us, who has a right to complain of the hardness or severity of God's dealing with us—to come forth with that gospel, in the utterance of which God may be said to wipe His hands of the blood of all who come within reach of the hearing of it—and to neutralize all your complaints about the curse and the corruption that have been entailed upon us, by lifting the welcome invitation to every man, of a righteousness overpassing all that we have lost, and of a grace that will restore us to a higher state of innocence and glory than that from which we are now the sentenced and the exiled wanderers.

LECTURE XXV.

ROMANS, v, 12—21.

"Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned: (for until the law sin was in the world: but sin is not imputed when there is no law. Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression, who is the figure of him that was to come. But not as the offence, so also is the free gift. For if through the offence of one many be dead, much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, which is by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many. And not as it was by one that sinned, so is the gift: for the judgment was by one to condemnation, but the free gift is of many offences unto justification. For if by one man's offence death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ.) Therefore as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life. For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners; so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous. Moreover the law entered, that the offence might abound. But where sin abounded grace did much more abound: that as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord."

We have now disserted at very great length on the tenet of original sin, both as it includes the two great articles of original depravity and original guilt—understanding by the one, that every individual of the human race brings a corrupt nature into the world with him, by which he is so inclined to what is sinful, that in fact all men are sinners: and understanding by the other, that he is justly responsible for sin thus emanated by his evil na-

ture—even though that nature came down by inheritance from his first parents, who, without being corrupt originally, corrupted themselves and sent down their acquired propensities to evil among all their descendants. We are aware that the doctrine of a guilt transmitted by Adam, is commonly carried farther than this—affirming, not merely that all men are to blame for the sins they personally do, under the instigations of an evil nature transmitted by Adam; but that they are also to blame for the proper and individual act of transgression done by Adam himself in the garden of Eden. We have not denied that this may be the doctrine of Scripture. We have only said that our own moral sense is altogether unable to apprehend it; and that while we can perceive how man is justly culpable, for every iniquitous deed of his history, caused by the iniquitous tendency of his heart, however that tendency may have been derived—Yet, we cannot perceive, how it is that he is justly culpable, for an iniquitous deed done, not by himself, but by another who lived nearly six thousand years ago. This, however, may be the real truth of the case—whether we are able or not to comprehend it. The Bible tells us of many things, of which, without its informations, we should have been altogether ignorant; and of many things, the reason of which is still a mystery to our understanding—though the reality of them has, by the testimony of God's own mouth, been made perfectly good to our convictions: And, therefore, on this point of imputation too, we would lie open to the informations of the record—fully

assured that there is nothing there, either at variance with absolute truth, or at variance with the character of that Being who is all goodness and justice and holiness and truth.

It is to the vindication of this character, that we mean to devote the last of these preliminary addresses, which we have thought fit to deliver, ere we come forward with a detailed exposition of the passage that we have so repeatedly read out to you. We have already attempted to reconcile the doctrine of original sin, as consisting of depravity, with the experience of man; and we have also attempted to show in how far this doctrine, as consisting of guilt and the imputation of guilt, is reconcilable with the moral sense of man. And let us now proceed to meet the charges and complaints that have been uttered because of it, against the dealings of God with His creatures—as if He had carried Himself with unjust and tyrannical severity against them—as if He had laid upon them an inevitable doom of wretchedness, against which all their struggles are unavailing—as if He had brought them into the world, in a state of helpless captivity to the power of corruption, and then left them to perish under a load of necessity, that He Himself had inflicted—as if He had made that to be the fault of man, which in fact was the appointment of God, that no willing and no striving on the part of the creature could possibly overrule: And thus there is a very prevalent feeling of its being indeed a great hardship, that God should so have dealt with the rational species that He has planted in our world—permitting its tainted fami-

lies to come into being at all; and to put forth their successive generations, in a state under which they behove to suffer, and so very many of them to suffer everlastingly.

We do not want to disguise this objection; but, after having presented it in all its strength, we want to dispose of it. And in our attempt to vindicate the dealings of God with the species, let us just begin with that portion of the species that are now within reach of our hearing. What is it that any one of you has to complain of? You speak of hardness—how or in what respect is it that you have been hardly dealt with? You say, that, without your consent, a corrupt nature has been given you; and so stuck on, as it were, that it cleaves and adheres and keeps by you wherever you go, and that with its presence so urging and so pursuing you, sin is unavoidable; and yet there is a law which denounces upon this sin the torments of a whole eternity. Well then, is this an honest complaint on your part? Do you really feel your corrupt nature to be a curse and a wretchedness, and are you accordingly most desirous to be rid of it? Would you like a purifying process to take effect upon you which shall at length transform that vitiated nature, that has so annoyed you, and so called forth your animadversions upon God? Do you sincerely feel it to be your provocation and your plague, that such an evil thing has been attached to your constitution—for if so, you would surely like of all things that it were again detached from you? No man really feels that to be a burden, which he does not feel a wish and a weariness

to be delivered from; and is this your wish and your weariness respecting the depravity of heart, that has so germinated from very infancy, and so grown through all the successive years of your life in the world, as to have made all your imaginations in the sight of God to be only evil and that continually? Do you complain that God should thus rate you and reckon with you, for a sinfulness which you got by inheritance, and without your consent—instead of getting it, as Adam did before you, by his own deliberate choice and the voluntary surrender of himself to the power of temptation? Well then this is your complaint against God; and here is the way in which we meet it. God is at this moment holding out to you in offer, the very relief which you now tell us that your heart is set upon. He is in perfect readiness for the administration of an unfailing specific, against that moral disease of which you complain so heavily. If the complaint be just as honest in the feeling of it as severe in the terms of it—then are your desires and God's desires most thoroughly at one; and you are not more willing for being emancipated from the power of corruption, than He is willing to set you at large and translate you into the pure element of holiness. Does not God wipe His hands of the foul charge that His sinful creatures would prefer against Him, when He says, and says honestly to us all—Turn unto me, and I will pour out my Spirit upon you? You are shapen in iniquity, and if in iniquity you descend to the grave, you will arise from it to an unrelenting judgment-seat, and to a then unescapable condemnation.

But, ere that happens, God meets you upon your way; and positively offers to make new creatures of you; and in the washing of regeneration ready to be poured forth, if you only want it, is He willing even now to sweep away the whole burden of the fancied injustice, which causes you to murmur. And, so near does He bring Himself to you, that He stands pledged to grant the clean heart and the right spirit, if you will only care so much about them as to enquire for them at His hand; and promises the Holy Ghost to all who ask it. Do you indeed feel it a hardship, that your heart is naturally so sinful? Come with the grievance, and come with an honest desire to be rid of it before God. Say to Him, and say it in good faith, take this heart of mine such as it is, and make it such as it should be; and if this be the honest aspiration of a heart that is really desirous of what it pretends to be—there will be nothing wanting on God's part, to renew, and to purify, and at length to wash most thoroughly away that original taint, over which you appear to mourn, as if it were indeed so much the bane of your existence, that your existence is not worth the having. God bids you only put Him to the proof by your petitions, and then see whether He will not pour out a blessing upon you; and is it the Being who has descended so far, and testified His willingness to grant you a present deliverance from the power of sin, and a future everlasting translation from all its allurements—is it He, we ask, whom you would thus challenge and upbraid for the undoing of your eternity?

That the creature should complain of a corruption which he loves, and wilfully perseveres in—that he should reproach the Creator for it, who is pointing out to him the way by which he can escape, and offers him all strength and aid to accomplish it—that he should lift an accusing voice against God, for having brought him within the limits of so foul a moral domain as the one he occupies; and at the same time turn away from the beseeching voice of the same God, stretching forth His hand for the purpose of taking him out of that domain if he will, and ushering him among the glories of a pure and spiritual region—that he should murmur because of a sinfulness in his nature, which he at the same time wilfully cherishes and retains, and obstinately refuses to let it go—that he should affect either to mourn or to be indignant on account of an inborn depravity, and that too at the moment when he spurns the proposition which God makes to him of an inborn grace, whereby he will cease to be that old creature, of whom he says it is hard that he should have been so formed, and become that new creature, respecting whom he taxes God for injustice, that He had not so made him—Who does not see that every possible objection, which can be raised against the Creator on account of what man is by nature, is most fully and fairly disarmed by what God offers to man in the gospel? And if he will persist in charging upon God, a depravity that He both asks and enables us to give up, did not we firmly retain it by the wilful grasp of our own inclinations—is it not plain that on the day of reckoning it will be clear

to the intelligent morality of all the assembled witnesses, that the complaints of man, because of his corruption, have been those of a hypocrite, who secretly loved the very thing he so openly complained of; and that God who will be justified when He speaketh, and clear when He judgeth, has, by the offer of a Spirit, that would both quell the corruption and quicken man from his death in trespasses and sins unto holiness, has indeed manifested Himself a God both of love and of righteousness, and poured over all His ways to the world in which we live, the lustre of a most full and resistless vindication?

We may conceive a human being to be born upon a territory, over which there is spread a foul and turbid atmosphere—charged with all the elements of discomfort and disease; at length in a given time, made known to all who breathe it, to be wrapped in some devouring flame which would burn up and destroy every creature that should abide within its vortex. And we may further conceive him to murmur against the God, who thus had placed him within the bounds of such a habitation. But let God point his way to another country, where freshness was in every breeze, and the whole air shed health and fertility and joy over the land that it encompassed—let Him offer all the means and facilities of conveyance, so as to make it turn simply upon the man's will, whether he should continue in the accursed region where he is, or be transported to another region which teems with all the enjoyments that he complains he has not:—And will not the worthless choice to abide

rather than to move, acquit God of the severity wherewith He has been charged, and unmask the hypocrisy of all the reproaches which man has uttered against Him? Will it not lay the blood of the coming destruction upon his own head; and though while he lives it be in disquietude, and when he dies it be in the volcanic whirl of the fierce and fiery element by which he is surrounded —is not the man the author of his own undoing; and can the blame or the execration of it be laid on that Being, who offered to bear him away from the territory of disease and danger, and securely put him down in the midst of a smiling and happy land?

Many may think this speculative; but we trust that there are some here present who feel it most closely and urgently and immediately practical. We stand with the offer of transporting you from the spiritual atmosphere of nature, charged as it is with all that is foul and turbulent and rebellious, and to bear you across the limits of conversion, to an atmosphere of peace and purity and holiness. We declare this gospel unto you. We preach that Jesus who is ready, even now, to bless every one of you by turning you from your iniquities; and through the channel of whose mediatorship it is, that the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Ghost are shed abundantly on all who believe. If you refuse to come, it is because you are not willing to come. God will make this clear on the great day of manifestation; and when He passes the condemnatory sentence on those who reject the Saviour, He will prove to the satisfaction of all assembled, that those who did not

pass from darkness to light, abode in the region of darkness, just because they loved the darkness; and persisted in the condition of evil, just because their deeds were evil. It is thus that He will vindicate Himself, and carry the consent of an observing universe along with Him, when He rebukes away from His presence, all of you who have neglected the great salvation. And therefore it is a salvation which we bid your acceptance of at this moment. Open your hearts that Christ may enter in; and, under the power of His grace, their hardness and vileness and depravity will melt away. We do not promise you an immediate transition from the spiritual element of earth, to the spiritual element of heaven. It is gradual. It is by a laborious ascent of fatigue and difficulty and strenuousness, that we at length attain those heights where all is serene and unspotted holiness. The portal of death must be passed, ere we reach the cloudless and ethereal expanse of that eternity, where freed from the last dregs of our vitiated nature, we can serve God without frailty and without a flaw. There is in these vile bodies of ours, some mysterious necessity for dying—There is an original taint which so embues the whole of our natural constitution, that the whole fabric must be taken down; and after its materials have been filtered and refined by the putrefaction of the grave, a new fabric will be made out of them; and the believer will then arise in all the first innocence of Adam, and compassed about with a security that shall be everlasting. Yet here the work must be begun, though there and there alone it is con-

summated. Here we must make head against the prevalence of sin, though there and there alone we shall be delivered from the presence of it. Here the struggle must be made, and the victory be decided—though there and there alone we shall have the triumph and the repose of victory. Here the grace which calls upon you to accept, must enter into contest with the corruption that so burdens and distresses you; but there and there alone grace will reign without a rival, and the principle of corruption that now is only kept in check will there be utterly and conclusively extirpated.

What is true of the original corruption, is also true of the original guilt. Do you complain of that debt, under the weight and oppression of which you came into the world? What ground we ask is there for complaining, when the offer is fairly put within your reach, of a most free and ample discharge—and that not merely for the guilt of original, but also for the whole guilt of your proper and personal sinfulness? It is indeed a very heavy burden that has been entailed upon you by the first Adam; but here we stand with the offer of a deliverance both from it, and from all the additions you have made to it by actual transgression—wrought out and made good for you by the suretyship and the ability of the second Adam. Your rescue from the corruption is not instantaneous, but your rescue from guilt is. The offer of a free and full forgiveness is even now unto you all; and why do you murmur at the grievousness of the reckoning which is out against

you, when there is out along with it the loudly sounding proclamation of remission to all who will, and acceptance without money or without price to all who will? The relief granted in the gospel, is at least an adequate counterpart to all the wretchedness which nature has entailed upon you; and even now are you invited by union with Christ, to be freed from the whole weight of all the responsibility that may have been incurred by your descent from Adam. What you have lost because of Adam's sin, is more than made up to you by Christ's righteousness; and we repeat it, that if there be any hardship in your suffering because of a fault which you did not commit—the hardship is greatly atoned for, by your enjoying favour and reward, because of an obedience that you did not render. It is thus again that the gospel vindicates God from all the aspersions which have been cast upon His government; and there is not a man who honestly complains that favour has been lost because of another's demerits, that we cannot silence and even satisfy, by telling him that all this favour may be regained because of another's deservings. We interpose the gospel of Jesus Christ, as the decisive reply to all the murmurs of those who revolt at the apparent severity of the divine administration; and affirm, upon the strength of its blessed overtures, that it depends upon man's own choice whether the discharge is not at least equal to the debt, and the recovery of our nature is not at least equal to the ruin of it.

We now hold ourselves prepared for vindicating the doctrine of the imputation of Adam's sin, even

in the farthest extent of it, when it goes beyond the apprehension and the acknowledgment of our moral sense altogether. We see how the blame lies upon us, of such personal sins as we commit—even though we have been led to the performance of these by a corrupt tendency of nature inherited from Adam. But we do not see how the blame lies upon us, of that proper and personal sin which rendered Adam an outcast from Paradise. It may be so though we see it not; and that it is so, is in beautiful and consenting harmony with what we are explicitly assured to be the effect of our union with the Saviour. From Him we derive, not merely a new nature which inclines us to righteousness and holiness, even as we derived from Adam our old nature which inclines us to all that is wicked and ungodly. But from Him we also derive an imputed righteousness, so as that we are reckoned with by God as if we were positively deserving creatures. The merit of Christ's obedience is transferred to us, as well as His holy and upright nature transferred to us; and from the very circumstance of His being called in Scripture the second Adam, from the very way in which He is there designed as a counterpart to the first Adam, would we be inclined to think that the guilt of Adam's disobedience was transferred to us, even as his corrupt and vitiated nature has also been transferred to us—In other words, that Adam is not merely the corrupt parent of a corrupt offspring, who sin because of the depravity wherewith he has tainted all the families of the earth; but who have sinned in him, to use the language of our old divines, as their federal head

—as the representative of a covenant which God made with him, and through him with all his posterity.

Certain it is, that, to screen a believer from the vengeance of an immutable law, something more is necessary than the atonement of his past offences, and the derivation of a holy nature from the Saviour. Even after the principle of grace has been implanted, there are the outbreakings of sin which serve to humble and to remind him, that never till death has pulverized his body into atoms, and the resurrection has again assembled them into a pure and holy structure—will he be wholly freed from that sore corruption, which so adheres, and so strives to obtain the victory over him. Still, and at any time after his conversion while he lives in the world, were he treated according to his own deservings would he be an outcast from the favour of that God whose justice is inflexible; and to meet this justice on the ground of acceptance, he must stand before it in another merit than his own, and be clothed upon with another righteousness than his own. Or, to be in favour with God, he stands in need of an imputed as well as of an infused righteousness; and the merit of Christ must be laid to his account, as well as the nature of Christ be laid upon his person. You have no title to cast out with the sin of Adam being imputed to you, if you do not cast out with the righteousness of Christ being imputed to you. The latter screens you from the former, and it screens you also from the guilt of your own positive offences. Without it, even the holiest man upon earth, would stand

before a God of perfect holiness, on a basis of utter insecurity; and with it the greatest sinner upon earth stands on a firmer and a higher 'vantage-ground, than even had all the innocence and virtue of Adam been both transmitted and ascribed to him. And I willingly consent to have the guilt of Adam charged upon me, if, along with it, the over-passing righteousness of Christ shall be reckoned to me; and let the severities be what they may which lie upon me under the economy of nature and of the law—I see in the corresponding privileges which are freely offered to me under the economy of the gospel, I see in them the fullest and the noblest compensation.

The question of original sin is allied with that of the origin of evil; and a very deep and unyielding obscurity hangs over it — how in a universe framed and upheld by a Being, of whom we are taught to believe that He has an arm of infinite power and a heart of infinite goodness—how under His administration, such a monster as evil, whether moral or physical, should ever be permitted to exist, is indeed a mystery, seated too far back among the depths of primeval creation and of the eternity behind it, for us the puny insects of a day to explore or to decide upon. One would think of God, that He would, if He could, banish all sin and wretchedness from that system of things, over which we have always been in the habit of thinking that He has the entire and undivided ascendancy; nor can we at all imagine, how with both the will and the ability of Omnipotence leagued against it, sin should ever have found an entrance,

or obtained a footing in any of those fair worlds that surround the throne of the universal Father. Yet so it is; and man with all the tone of an indignant sufferer is heard to lift his remonstrances against it—as if he bore the whole weight of an injury, laid upon him at the pleasure of an arbitrary tyrant, who has laid open his dominions to the cruel inroads of a spoiler, who but for Him would have neither had the power nor the liberty of mischief. But without making so much as an attempt to solve the difficulties of a topic so inscrutable, we may at least say, that one thought has occurred, which, more than any other, melts us into acquiescence; and disposes us to look on the rise and continuance of evil, as being indeed some dire though mysterious necessity which overhangs creation—and that is, that, after all, it is not man who bears the whole burden of this dark and awful visitation—Neither is it any other creature beside man. It is the Creator in fact who offers to take upon Himself, the whole burden of it; or at least to relieve our species of it altogether. It is at His cost, and not at ours, unless we so choose it, that sin has invaded the world we tread upon. It is He, the Eternal Son, who went forth to the battle against this Hydra; and who in the soreness of His conflict, bore what millions through eternity could not have borne; and who, though He had all the energies of the Godhead to sustain Him, yet wellonigh gave way under the pressure of a deep and dreadful endurance; and who, by His tears and agonies and cries, gave proof to the might of that mysterious adversary over whom He triumphed. Yes we murmur

because of the origin of evil. But Christ was the mighty sufferer who hath borne it away from us; and let us hazard what reflections we may on those who die in ignorance, or who die in infancy—yet, in regard to you who are hearing us, every ground of complaint is annihilated. Christ is offered; and you by confidence in Him, and cleaving unto Him, will reach those happy shores of peace and light and joy, where all sin is for ever banished, and all evil is unknown.

END OF VOLUME TWENTY-SECOND.

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